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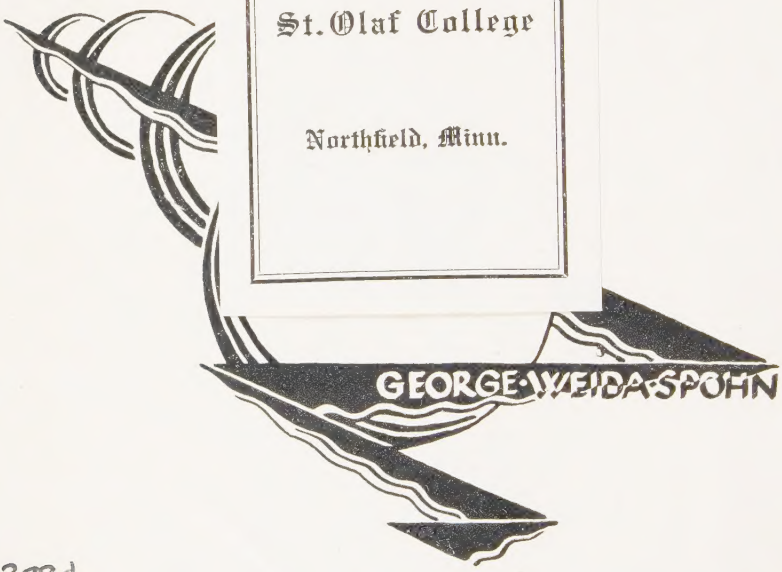

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Memorial Reading Room

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PILGRIMS OF ADVERSITY

BOOKS BY

WILLIAM McFEE

ALIENS

AN OCEAN TRAMP

CAPTAIN MACEDOINE'S DAUGHTER

CASUALS OF THE SEA

COMMAND

HARBOURS OF MEMORY

PILGRIMS OF ADVERSITY

A SIX HOUR SHIFT

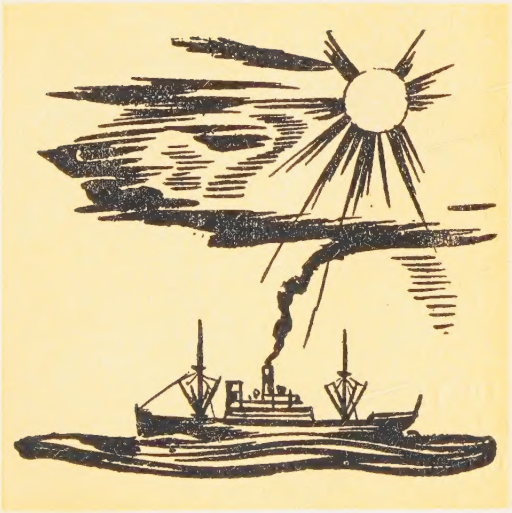
RACE

SUNLIGHT IN NEW GRANADA

SWALLOWING THE ANCHOR

★

PILGRIMS OF ADVERSITY



WILLIAM McFEE

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.
GARDEN CITY 1928 NEW YORK

DECORATIONS BY EDWARD A. WILSON

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FIRST EDITION

TO
HERBERT AND EMMIE
ALLINGHAM

60473

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The characters in this novel have been drawn from life. But they have not been drawn from living persons. Like the republic in which they play their parts, they must be accepted as symbols of reality rather than the portraits of physical personalities.

W. M.

"Man is remarkable
but he is not a masterpiece."

—LORD JIM

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

CAPTAIN MILLERTON had never heard of robots at the time of this episode, but he would have invested heavily in any such invention for use on his voyages. He might have even suggested an improvement upon the original designs, whereby the creatures were fed once and for all on joining the vessel, and required no further attention beyond winding up at regular intervals.

"Like chronometers," he would have explained, with contemptuous relish.

As it was, he stalked up Jamaica Street from the Broomielaw and, crossing Argyle Street, made his way into St. Vincent Square, his mind occupied with the difficulties of getting what he called "a decent crew." He was sailing the following morning for Puerto Balboa in Costaragua, calling at Havana, and perhaps other way ports, and he was going up to see his owners "to give them a piece of his mind," as he phrased it. Young George Harkelaw, son of the senior partner, who was becoming celebrated in London, under another name, for his dry, biting sketches of Scottish life and character, used to say that Captain Millerton had given them so many pieces of his mind, it was doubtful whether he'd any of that commodity remaining. George was aware of Captain Millerton's secret hatred of Scotsmen and enjoyed poking him up. Captain Millerton lived in Folkestone on the English Channel, where his wife ran a high-class boarding house, and he nursed a grievance that the *Candleshoe,* one of the smaller and older ships of Harkelaw, Frazer & Govanlock's fleet of tramps, never by any chance loaded or discharged in a southern port. And Captain Millerton had not the slightest intention of wasting several pounds in rail fare from a northern port.

The captain was a man of forty-five, and he maintained constantly the air of one in conflict with an adverse destiny. He was not an ordinary commander. Most captains can recall some subordinate or other who gave satisfaction. Most are able to

voice disappointment over failures. But to Captain Millerton there was nothing else to be expected. In addition to this pessimism he was the victim of a certain peculiar parsimony and a grim suspicion. He was not entirely to blame for this. He had had unusual experiences.

In the old days Captain Millerton had been rather a buck. As third mate of a sailing ship he had "cleared out" and worked a couple of years with the French in their attempts to cut a canal at Panama. For some reason he was immune from fever. Then he came home, rather the worse for wear, with a fair knowledge of French and Spanish but no money, so he went to sea as a quartermaster. This was a point in his career. He passed for master after a few years as second mate and then, while first mate of the *Ravenshoe,* they picked up a tow, and Mister Harry Millerton's share was seventeen hundred pounds.

The extraordinary thing about this was the effect it produced upon the *Ravenshoe's* first mate. He had never had anything in the way of property beyond a sea bag, a sextant, Norie's *Navigation,* a nautical almanac, and the skin of an alligator he had once, so he said, shot on the Chagres River. This had never been properly cured and the smell of it competed successfully with the lazarette of any vessel on which the young man sailed. Nor was there anything in his record to forecast a change in his character. Harry Millerton was merely one of many improvident and intermittently dissolute young gentlemen who officered the British Mercantile Marine, flitting from one ship to another, whose twin mottoes are that "they will be a long time dead" and "there are more ships than parish churches." All this held good up to the fortunate day when the *Ravenshoe* came into Milford Haven with the fine eight-thousand-ton *Yalta* on the end of the tow rope, she having lost her propeller homeward bound from the Plate with hides and grain. And the mate's share was seventeen hundred pounds.

Harry Millerton, going up to St. Vincent Square to give Harkelaw, Frazer & Govanlock a piece of his mind, reflected that he had never spent a penny of that seventeen hundred. Ha! he ejaculated, and it was just as well he hadn't. His mind went on to brood on what had happened after that. He had the *Ivanhoe,* six thousand tons deadweight, given him after four years more of going mate. His wife, in the boarding house he had bought in Folkestone for a thousand pounds, was making

money. Harry Millerton left off spending money. It became an obsession with him to add to that other seven hundred and make it an even thousand. It was just that when old Harkelaw sent him a wire at Swansea to go to London and take the *Ivanhoe,* Captain Griggs being sick and unable to go to sea. His first command! What a simple young fellow he was! For he found it was the chief engineer's first run in charge. The old chief was staying back to watch the new *Wyvenhoe,* then building in the Tyne. Captain Millerton remembered he and the new chief went ashore and had a drink or two the night before sailing. Last time he ever did that, by George! What a fool he was to listen to all the gusty bragging that Simpson let out! What he'd done and what he was going to do now he had a chance. Captain Millerton's lip curled in contempt of himself as well as Simpson. He even paused as he entered St. Vincent Square to torture himself still more with the memory of that horrible time.

No doubt, he mused bitterly, Simpson would have achieved wonders. No doubt the old chief had been secretive about the capacity of the bunkers. In those days it was almost a mania with men to have special knowledge, with the pathetic notion of rendering themselves indispensable. Whatever excuses might be made now, Captain Millerton would never forget the horror of that morning a week after leaving Las Palmas, when he was called from his bunk by the chief, whose blackened hands and shoulders were fouling the spotless paint of the doorway, and he heard a desperate mumble to the effect that they were "done." Only another day's coal left, and three days from Savannah.

He remembered he had been sleeping in a gray woolen nightgown, and the sleeves were rucked up above his elbows as he struggled to a sitting posture and turned his legs over the edge of the bedplace. The chief's eyes had been fixed on Captain Millerton's feet.

He wouldn't believe it, he remembered, in a sort of dreary satisfaction at his own supreme folly. Put on a pair of heavy rubber boots, old trousers, and a still older pea jacket, and slush lamp in hand had followed that infernal fool into the dusty darkness of the cross bunker. Even now he couldn't believe that any man, let alone himself, Harry Millerton, could have had such agonizing ill fortune. It made him faint with nausea even now to think of it. It was an ever-present nightmare with him all the time, that it might happen again in spite of all his care. It

would bring him out of his sleep in the small hours, at sea, bathed in a cold sweat. The very sight of Mr. Barker, the chief of the *Candleshoe,* coming along the bridge deck with a serious expression on his face, would start Captain Millerton toward a mental panic. Sometimes he wondered if Barker didn't know this. He had sailed with that Simpson. . . .

And then the two weeks lying helpless on the calm Atlantic, the *Ivanhoe* rocking gently and drifting in the blue grass-strewn current of the Gulf Stream slowly eastward, making the tow, when they got it, all the shorter, to be sure, but nearly driving Captain Millerton to suicide. True, Simpson was in a worse fix superficially, since the miscalculation was his and he would be certainly discharged. But Captain Millerton, striding to and fro on the bridge deck, could spare nothing but exasperated rage for Simpson, the fool! The captain was entranced by the mental picture of a perfect professional career dashed to destruction by a great hulking slob who hadn't had enough character and acuteness to climb over a hill of coal and see for himself it was all hollow behind. Those Canary Island trimmers couldn't possibly be trusted. He saw himself, Captain Millerton, with a fine profitable boarding house clear of debt, a bank balance of a thousand pounds, and a good ship and career ahead of him. And what was the reality? He paused at the entrance to the dark old block of buildings where his employers hid themselves in high-panelled rooms. Out! The very thought of the thing made him shudder a little as he stood there. To begin again in some other employ as third mate or bosun, perhaps, and be behind everybody else of his own age for the rest of his life.

That two weeks adrift, out of the track of east- or west-bound traffic, made his hair iron gray over the temples and his mouth set into a hard, bitter, suspicious sneer. It left its mark on Simpson too, but he soon recovered. An engineer could always get a job anywhere ashore or at sea. It was a climax for Captain Millerton when he reached Glasgow and stood there, on this step where he was now, his heart full of furious anger and a sense of injustice.

And the upshot was, if it hadn't been for the underwriters, old Harkelaw would have kept him on. He had given them a piece of his mind. He had gone into that stupid knavish trick of the chiefs hoarding theoretical coal on their fuel reports while all the time they were gambling on a spell of bad weather or a sudden call at a strange bunkering port to square them up.

He told the owners to their faces the coal sheets were so much bunkum. Lord, he had pitched into 'em!

They had laid him off for six months, for all that, and then he had gone third mate of the *Wyvenhoe* for a while, until he began to think they had forgotten him. He was poorer by a hundred and fifty pounds because of that lay-off, and his wife, who was happier when he was at sea, grew weary of him about the basement of the boarding house. Time enough for him to be round when he retired.

The fact that he had recovered his balance, so to speak, and held on after that awful beginning, had in no sense made him less wary of being caught again. He was a by-word now among the mates, engineers, and stewards of the Harkelaw boats.

For the shock of his suspension and demotion had reacted upon his character in a curious way. It had dried up those bitter springs of conviviality which had inspired his early dissipations, and left behind an arid avarice and a moody animosity toward the men he was compelled to carry with him to work the ship.

This state of mind was by no means obvious to the world at a glance. It was characteristic of Captain Millerton to convey the impression to newcomers on the *Candleshoe* that at last he was about to sail with a real man. He had a quick decisive way of walking, a short sharp utterance in clipped English with a southern accent that was fair enough to delude the most watchful. They found out where they stood a week or so later.

The fact was, Captain Millerton had an ideal and was working toward it. The possession of so large a sum of money, as it was in those days, had inspired him with the ambition to enlarge it to the perfect rotundity of ten thousand pounds. To achieve this had become a deep and relentless desire. His profession had never been more than a living to him, and now, secure in the fastness of his cabin on the *Candleshoe*, he formulated schemes for adding month by month and year by year to the balance he carried in several banks, now and again transmuting it into excellent first mortgages on hotel property around Folkestone.

And it was in furtherance of these schemes, or one of them, that he was now seeking a word with the office. It was the custom of Harkelaw, Frazer & Govanlock, a custom derived from their days as owners of sailing ships, to turn over the victualling of their ships to the commander. For so much a day per man

and so much a day per officer, the captain provided the stores. Captain Millerton was not the man to miss such an opportunity. On the contrary he made a very decent thing out of it. But he had had a conversation with a captain who had called at Central American ports lately and who reported very high prices for fresh provisions. The bumboat men and ship chandlers were robbers, this captain said. To Captain Millerton all bumboat men and ship chandlers were robbers, without any exceptions, but he proposed to take the matter up with Mr. Govanlock. It was, to Captain Millerton, who ate very sparingly indeed and never went ashore to eat under any circumstances whatever, a scandal the way engineers and firemen devoured such immense quantities of food. To give them anything beyond staples like salt beef and potatoes was "like feeding a donkey with mulberries."

He was going to use that phrase when he saw Govanlock.

Mr. Govanlock, however, was not in. The clerk, who slid off his high stool to explain that the junior partner was out for half an hour, took no notice of the shabbily dressed woman who stood by the counter, one gloved hand resting on the edge, timidly seeking to catch his eye.

"Mister Harkelaw is within," he told Captain Millerton. "Will you see him, perhaps?"

"Well, why not?" muttered the captain, though he was not anxious to bother the old man with his particular grievance. He glanced at the woman and sized her up. A mate's wife, he calculated. Bothering the office about money, he'd be bound. These improvident fools never had a month's pay ahead of them. He, Captain Millerton, would be taxed to keep that sort of people in the poorhouse. He regarded her with a cold look, as though reproaching her for the expense she was to cause him in the future, and was about to pass behind the broad mahogany when she addressed the clerk, who had returned to his high stool. Her voice was low and nervous, and the youth, closing his lips in impatience and frowning toward her, went on with his work.

"Could I see the owners please?" she whispered to Captain Millerton. "A little matter of ma half-pay note not comin' this month."

Captain Millerton was about to tell her that it was no business of his, when a ground-glass door opened and John Harkelaw, senior partner of the firm, came out shaking hands with his visitor. In the room behind him could be seen a handsome young

gentleman, very fashionably attired in morning dress, smoking a cigarette in front of the fireplace.

John Harkelaw shook hands with his captain and then turned to the woman looking eagerly over the counter. He was a huge, powerfully framed man of over sixty; his fine face with its short gray beard conveyed an impression of solid character and stern justice. The woman, who had been nervous, now seemed to cringe.

"What is the matter, mistress?" he demanded. "What's grievin' ye?"

The young man slipped from his stool again and whispered apologetically in his employer's ear. That gentleman, his head lowered and the corners of his mouth pulled down, seemed to plant his broad-toed shoes even more firmly upon the chocolate-coloured linoleum on the floor. The young man was understood to say something about the woman's "pertinacity."

"Pertinacity!" echoed Mr. Harkelaw, emitting the word with incredible deliberation and contempt between his teeth. "That's a university word, I'll be bound. Get the leddy a chair!"

Somewhat nonplussed and under the surprised scrutiny of Captain Millerton, the young man ran hastily to a chair and brought it to his master.

"Come in, mistress!" said the old gentleman sternly. "Sit down there. I understand ye're Mister Cochrane's wife, the first mate of the *Ivanhoe*. If you'll excuse us a moment, I will see you in my office. Come in, Captain, come in."

Captain Millerton was far from satisfied with this turn of events. He didn't want to talk to old Harkelaw, who made a most reprehensible practice of taking a lot of dirty slum children from Cowcaddens and the closes off the Dumbarton Road down to his estate in Rothesay in the far-famed Kyles of Bute, every summer. He wanted Govanlock, the hard-bitten young junior partner who had married Kitty Frazer and who approached ships and the men on ships from the purely commercial standpoint. Govanlock, to Captain Millerton's delight, often slipped into the habit of calling the ships officers and men by the name of "hands." Govanlock indeed had been seized by a brawny person applying for a second engineer's job—seized by the front of his waistcoat and shaken when he had mincingly observed they required no hands at that time. It was, though he didn't know it, a perfect insult, and he didn't repeat it for some time after that adventure.

But Harkelaw had all sorts of sentimental legacies from his days as an owner of sailing vessels that brought sugar from Demerara to the foot of Jamaica Street. There was an example. Mrs. Cochrane's husband had been put ashore in Lisbon and sent to hospital, and his wages of course had stopped. What did she expect? Hadn't they saved anything? A fine thing if a man's wages went on whether he worked or not! Might as well have Socialism and be done with it.

And here was young George, laughing at something, quite possibly Captain Millerton himself. It made the captain dumb with resentment to think how this whippersnapper of twenty-five would come into many times ten thousand pounds without doing one lick of work for it! On the other hand, Captain Millerton was a strong believer in primogeniture and the sacred character of private property. Damned supercilious popinjay, for all that, he reflected, puzzled by the conflicting emotions aroused by the sight of the smiling George Harkelaw.

"Pertinacity!" repeated the old gentleman, sitting down to his desk, and told his son what he thought of the new brand of office boys from the university. George was amused.

"Well, Father, if you'd take my advice, you'd send all those lads to sea first. You could inaugurate an apprenticeship system, and those who didn't want to be mates could come into the office. It would give them some contact with the people who make our money. What do you say, Captain Millerton?"

"Where would we put apprentices on the *Candleshoe?*" asked the captain. He could never grasp a question in the abstract.

"We could build a room just behind yours," the young man suggested wickedly. It was a source of great amusement to him, the immense airs captains put on over the rest of the world. He had been to Oxford and was in the habit of meeting people in the great world of London; but nothing, he was fond of saying, could compete with the colossal opinion his father's captains had of themselves. Cabinet ministers and plenipotentiaries of foreign powers were meek and humble compared with the master of a six-thousand-ton tramp steamer.

"What was it you wanted to see us about?" asked the elder Harkelaw. He agreed with his son in principle, but the policy of the firm and the keen competition for freights in a poor market were against the scheme.

Captain Millerton suddenly realized that his real objective was not easily explained to the big burly Scotsman sitting be-

fore him, especially with that supercilious son looking on. What he wanted was an extra penny a day on each man's food and an extra twopence on the cabin and engineer's mess. This was about three shillings a day more, and to most men not worth bothering about. But it was four pounds ten a month and fifty-two pounds a year, which was the interest on seventeen hundred pounds. That was the magic of it to Captain Millerton. He figured he could save that on the food bills easily, and it would practically give him the use of the very sum with which he had started his career as a financier.

What he omitted to consider was that Harkelaw, Frazer & Govanlock knew the value per annum of this slight increase as well as he. When he propounded his scheme and alluded to the risks of the West Indies in getting fresh provisions, the old gentleman shook his head.

"No," he announced and kept his gaze steadily upon Captain Millerton. "You'll have to manage on the regular subsistence money, Captain, the same as all the others do. Mind you, it's not to be supposed you take the responsibility without making a few shillings for yourself. You're expected to have a margin of safety, as you may say."

"That's just what I haven't got," objected the captain, and frowned as Mr. George laughed and drew a fresh cigarette from his handsome solid-silver case.

"Oh, come, come!" said Mr. Harkelaw testily. "What's the meaning of that! You'll tell me you're losing money next."

"So I am. I had three barrels of flour from MacNabb's last voyage and the middles of them were solid rock. Damp. Dead loss to me. I had to feed the crew on cabin biscuit, and they complained. They complained!"

"Well, Andrew MacNabb will make that good to ye, if ye ask him, I'm sure. I'll telephone him now."

"Don't trouble. I've seen him and gave him a piece of my mind," said Captain Millerton, glancing sourly at the smiling George. "I wish I could find a crew that were satisfied with what I give them, Mr. Harkelaw. The engineers are grumbling from the time we sail to the day we get back.

"What! On half a crown a day? Then the steward must spoil the stuff."

"He suits the cabin," grumbled the captain. "The mates never complain."

This seemed to strike George Harkelaw as so excruciatingly

funny that he walked to the window and shared his amusement with the roofs over against Queen's Square.

"Well!" Mr. Harkelaw Senior hesitated a moment. He was sitting up in his chair in an alert, uneasy pose, and he began to turn over a batch of letters and cables. "How do you get on with your chief, Captain?" he asked suddenly.

"Oh, well enough, well enough. It's the others make the noise. About the grub," Captain Millerton explained. "It's like feeding a donkey with mulberries," he added.

John Harkelaw made a gesture of impatience.

"Ah, tchah!" he snorted. "Just forget your little trumpery difficulties for a while, Captain. I've something to tell ye about the Company's policy. Take a seat now."

Captain Millerton sat down in a heavy chair and looked at his employer. It was not entirely the captain's fault that he had grown to associate the phrase "Company's policy" with changes of no particular advantage to himself. When they fired anybody, he reflected, it was the Company's policy which demanded it. A dogged expression came over Captain Millerton's face, an expression that had in it, nevertheless, a faint tinge of complacency. He had never believed there was any gratitude in the world, and he was now about to receive proof that he had been correct in his suspicions.

But as he listened to John Harkelaw's ponderous phrases this dogged expression faded and he grew interested. He was unaware that young George had turned from the window and was standing by the broad flat desk, tapping his teeth with a silver pencil and looking down meditatively upon the master of the *Candleshoe*. Captain Millerton started as he heard George take up a phrase the old gentleman had used several times and enlarge upon it. He didn't know George was so close.

"Feeders," said George, "are necessary if we are to maintain our trade connections in those parts. And this railway will tap a country so rich—well, nobody knows how rich Costaragua really is. Our idea is to go in with Mr. Rouken's friend and aid him to the best of our ability."

"I've heard in Puerto Balboa that they'd sunk millions in it and never would see a penny," said Captain Millerton harshly. He was one of those men whose experience of tropical regions ferments into a kind of frothing animosity toward everything connected with them.

"Then ye were misinformed," said Mr. Harkelaw Senior.

"It was Gonzalez told me himself," retorted Captain Millerton. "He ought to know. Born up in Caravosa, he told me."

The two Harkelaws looked at each other.

"And he's your agent in Puerto Liñon. He ought to handle this," added the captain.

"Gonzalez," said John Harkelaw, "is our agent in so far as actual business is concerned, and not a particularly good one. I may tell you, Captain, that our policy is to get business. Gonzalez & Co. are in politics."

"Every man jack in Costaragua is in politics," said Captain Millerton, with quiet contempt.

"Yes, and Gonzalez & Co. are not at all eager to see the railway go up to San Benito."

"He said it would never get to Caravosa in our time. You're right. He's against it. I could see that, but it didn't make any difference to me," said the captain.

"Of course he's against it. All his relations and friends are fighting the Striker-Perkins interests tooth and nail. That is where we come in, Captain. In this matter we wish you to act as our unofficial representative. I'm frank to say there will quite possibly be something substantial for yourself. Not from us you understand, but from Striker-Perkins."

"Who's to give the orders?" demanded the captain.

"Oh, the orders will come from us for the present," said the old gentleman. "You will get them by cable in Havana. We are telling you this, Captain, because we anticipate selling the *Candleshoe*."

"Selling her?" exclaimed the captain. All his old apprehensions revived.

"To the Perkins interests," explained young George. "They will require her for a few months for special service, and it is most probable they will transfer her to Costaraguan registry. They may even change her name."

"What about me? Am I paid off, then, when they take her?"

"Most certainly not. You are our representative and will command her at all times. That's why Father asked you how you get on with the chief. Knowing him as you do, Captain Millerton, how do you think he'll manage his end of it?"

"He'll growl and carry on, I expect," said Captain Millerton. "But you'll never get the crowd to sign Costaraguan articles unless you guarantee their pay. I've had some of that sort of trouble once before, in Dutch Guiana."

"We leave that to you, Captain," said John Harkelaw, eyeing his commander steadily. "What there is in it for you will amply reimburse you for sweetening the crew. A thing like that cannot be handled at a distance. We have our end of it to manage. There are several interests in London behind Señor Perkins, I may tell you. If we succeed, there will be a large increase in business, and more than likely we shall have a vessel running regularly to New York from Puerto Balboa, with sisal."

"The *Candleshoe?*"

"A new *Candleshoe,*" said young George, smiling. "Your *Candleshoe* will probably be the *Santa Candelaria* by that time."

"And full of rats, garlic, and fleas," added the captain.

"Possibly," agreed George. "But what Father was going to say, I think, was that you will not need to mention anything of this to a single soul."

"I see myself," ejaculated Captain Millerton ironically. "They'd be asking sixty pounds a month all round!"

"Well, the matter remains *in statu quo* until you receive our instructions in Havana. You may see Mr. Perkins himself. He cables from New Orleans that he is leaving next week. As for your trouble with the victualling, we can go into that matter when you return to Glasgow."

"If I do. I'm not so pleased at sailing under the Yellow Duster. Suppose I have trouble? The consul won't look at me, will he?"

"Ah," said George, regarding the captain with much amusement, "if you split your share with him, he might stretch a point."

Captain Millerton sprang up irritably and waved his hand as though trying to drive off a troublesome insect. It annoyed him to feel that young George refused to take seriously those conventional anxieties of his.

"You see, Captain, you might have to take steps a pious consul would not approve," went on George. "The *Santa Candelaria* will perhaps be in politics too."

"Now I must ask you to excuse me," broke in John Harkelaw. "I must see Mrs. Cochrane. She's probably wanting to get back and prepare the dinner."

Much to Captain Millerton's annoyance, young George picked up his hat and stick and elected to walk down the street with him.

"What sort of a place is Puerto Balboa?" asked George presently.

"It isn't a place. It's a dump. It's an unsafe port too. But if we don't go there the Germans will."

"It's part of our plan to build a breakwater."

"Cost a mint," objected the captain. "Swell goes in at forty mile an hour. Couldn't even anchor if it wasn't for the cay. Worst I've ever seen."

"And what else is there to be seen?"

"Nothing," snapped the other. "I don't go ashore anywhere. Gonzalez & Co. do all the business."

"I wonder you follow the sea, Captain," said George. "I should have thought a man of your business ability would settle down ashore."

It was a cruel predicament for Captain Millerton. Shipowners are not in the habit of suggesting shore billets to their commanders unless they wish to promote or to fire them. Young George might have some fancy mate or other. . . . Captain Millerton remarked in a flat toneless voice that jobs ashore were "not so easy got."

At the corner of Argyle Street he refused a drink.

"Never drink ashore," he muttered. "You as an owner don't object, I suppose?"

"Oh, no. But it is occasionally diplomatic," said George, smiling faintly. "And one can be human at times."

Captain Millerton did not contest this audibly, but his expression seemed to suggest that he doubted it. There was a very short spare beard on his chin and jaw, and George Harkelaw, with his literary fancies that, as with many Scots, ran somewhat to the humorously *macabre,* suddenly was reminded of the hair that grows on a corpse after death. He put the unwholesome thought aside. Captain Millerton was alive enough, he reflected whimsically. Let anybody try to borrow a pound note from him and see! He wanted very much to tell the captain a new story he had heard, illustrative of the avarice of Scotsmen, so well known below the Tweed. He refrained, as he had a more urgent matter to discuss.

"Well," he said, "the fact is, Captain, I was going to ask you whether you would be needing a junior engineer."

"Not as I know of, but you can't depend on them from one day to the next," muttered the captain.

"Because I've a friend who is very anxious to get to sea."

"Has he a ticket?" asked the captain.

"Oh, surely. Second class. He has been out east, you understand, and has had some private trouble and wishes to go to sea again, but not in his old employ, as that means a two-year engagement in India."

"He's not sick, is he?" asked the captain suspiciously.

"Not bodily sickness, but sick in his mind, you may say."

His small restless eyes—no one knew the colour of Captain Millerton's eyes—remained momentarily upon the keen, sharply refined face of George Harkelaw, and all the animosity of a narrow heart and mind culminated in a dart of suspicion like a stab of flame from a gun. Suppose this was all some trick to get him under the Costaraguan flag! All this tosh about an engineer sick in his mind! Most of them hadn't any minds, if Captain Millerton's experience was worth anything. He moved his shoulders rapidly and rubbed his lower lip hard.

"The old man said there'd be some sugar in this for me," he said in an altered, washed-out tone. "And from what *you* said about the consul I fancy I've got to paddle my own canoe, eh?"

"That's exactly the way of it," replied George. "I'd like to go with you, as supercargo, but I have a job of my own in London. You'll have to guard our interests without antagonizing the Costaraguan government. You're to support them, as a matter of fact. That's the curious thing about this—er—investment, Captain. The Conservatives are the revolutionists. What we are doing is to assist law and order."

"I never heard of anybody making much out of that job," said Captain Millerton, with the simple knavery of a simple and avaricious mind. George laughed.

"You'll hear now," he said. "This has been on the stocks a long time, Captain."

"Put it conservatively, what is there in it for me?" persisted Captain Millerton.

"Five thousand, perhaps," said George. "You with your flair for opportunities, and knowing the language, will make something under the rose."

"Why do you put it my way?" came the demand petulantly. George laughed.

"Captain, we shipowners are not such fools as you people on board seem to think. We have a little gumption. We know

something about our shipmasters. You'll have to earn it, though."

"Aye. I dare say I'll be in the calaboose in Puerto Balboa before it's all over." And Captain Millerton, fully assured and entirely willing to risk fifty jails for that money, flung away down the street.

"Don't forget what I told you about my friend," called George, very much amused.

"I'll let you know in the office," the captain remarked and set off down to the Broomielaw. He wished to call at the Shipping Offices before going along to the Queen's Dock, where the *Candleshoe* was loading machinery and general for Puerto Balboa. They would get the explosives, fifty tons of gelatin, down the bay.

The Broomielaw is one of those thoroughfares that have achieved unusually wide fame. It ranks with the Bund, State Street in Boston, the Barbary Coast in San Francisco, South Street in New York, and the East India Dock Road in London. It fronts the river Clyde in the heart of Glasgow, the second city of the Empire, the cradle of the mechanical propulsion of seagoing vessels. It is not an attractive place, night or day, summer or winter, save perhaps to the crowds of seamen who line up in the paying-off department of the Board of Trade offices at the foot of James Watt Street. Even Captain Millerton, not remarkably susceptible to the more subtle influences that throng the air, regarded the shabby street, with the great drays roaring over the granite setts, the clanking dredger out in the stream, the seething mass of pedestrians pouring over the Jamaica Street Bridge, with frank distaste. It was gray overhead and looked like rain. The climate was included among the things Captain Millerton held against Scotland. His chief mate, a gentle old buffer with the very unsuitable name of Punshon, was addicted to admiring Scotch weather. "Nice open weather, Cap'en," he would chirrup from beneath a sou'-wester upon which the rain was beating a sharp tattoo. His round pink face with the toothbrush moustache annoyed the captain. He was always in such an infernal good humour, nobody could explain why. He was a failure, for he had commanded in sail when Captain Millerton was third mate. And he had three bouncing daughters to keep. And yet one of his favourite remarks was that "Life's full of fun!" The silly old fool! Life held very little fun for Captain Millerton and those who sailed with him.

He forgot the innumerable small irritations of his professional life as he reached the Board of Trade offices. He saw his chief engineer, Mr. Barker, his hands in his pockets, a large gold albert drawn tightly across his double-breasted blue-serge waistcoat, a bowler hat pushed back from his moist forehead, standing at the corner. Two things about Mr. Barker's appearance were immediately noticeable. His boots were of a popular cheap American style with a toe cap like a pear and shiny yellow in colour; and his pipe was a curved meerschaum almost the same shade but carved to resemble a female. When these phenomena had been considered, there remained his very large moustache, a brown protuberance so sleek that it appeared to be fashioned from a species of horn, a pair of observant gray eyes, and large hairy hands garnished with broad gold rings. His expression, as he caught sight of his captain approaching, committed him to nothing save watchfulness and caution. Most people who had business with Captain Millerton sooner or later found it advisable to cultivate these virtues.

"Anything wrong, Chief?" the captain asked, nodding to Mr. Barker. That was one of his peculiarities. He took for granted that disaster was always impending.

"Nothing that I know of," was the ungracious reply. "We'll have to get another third, though."

"Get another . . . ! You mean to say Evans is leaving? Well, you might find these things out a little sooner, that's all I can say."

"How am I to know he's leaving if he don't tell me? He only packed his bag this morning."

"Well, it's a pity you can't keep your juniors, Chief."

"Me!" Mr. Barker's voice was not loud but it was distinct. "Now, look you here, Cap'en, I'll keep my juniors all right if you use a little discretion and keep a better table."

"You mean you'll keep them if they get ham and eggs three times a day, roast pheasant, champagne, and oysters on Sundays, eh? Of course you will. You needn't tell me that."

Mr. Barker's voice lowered as Captain Millerton's rose.

"Nobody's asked for all those things, although I may tell you we had a chicken now and again on the *Wyvenhoe* and the skipper didn't lose by it."

"Oh, it's chickens you want, is it?" the captain put in with immense sarcasm. "Like you and the second had in the army, eh?"

Mr. Barker, his eyes on the ground, seemed to be readjusting his whole mental attitude to include this cryptic remark. It was a sign of Captain Millerton's extreme irritation when he alluded to Mr. Barker's military career in the South African War. The captain knew the second had been the chief's comrade in arms during that campaign and he had occasionally expressed a rash desire to see Mr. Humphries change his ship. He said so now.

"If you'd come and told me you needed a new second," he muttered, turning away.

"If you lose him you lose me," snapped Mr. Barker.

"I know. You said that before. He must be useful to you."

"He is. I don't know anybody else who'd stick to the job we've got on the *Candleshoe*," said Mr. Barker, his bold eyes roving with angry curiosity over his commander's twitching features. "He's saved my life, and I've hit him in the face many a time, Cap'en, and the less we say about him the better. It's a new third we need, I was telling you."

"Don't you know anybody, Chief?"

"Plenty, but I'm not askin' them to sail on a hungry ship! Evans said it was like being on a weekly boat, where you find yourself. A good lad that. He's going into Paddy Henderson's ships."

"All right. Then leave it to me," said Captain Millerton disagreeably, and much to his chief engineer's surprise added: "I have a man ready for you. With a second's ticket too."

"That so? Well, there's plenty of work for him, Cap'en. I'm just going in to sign on a fresh trimmer. Who's your man, Cap'en?"

"I didn't say I knew him. I said I knew of him. The owners seem fond of him. Been out east and now wants to go out west, I suppose," said the captain, who habitually veered from foul to fair weather with his chief engineer by way of a dry remark at the expense of a third person. They were very much like two dogs, who fight always but occasionally attack outsiders. The chief grunted.

"Out east, eh? Then he's marked. Sign him on and send him down, Cap'en. We'll mark him again."

Captain Millerton was betrayed into communicating what George Harkelaw had said of the man who had been badly treated by a woman. As the chief engineer got the bearings of the information a sardonic smile spread over his face.

"Just the man for you, Cap'en," he remarked.

"What do you mean, just the man for me? What do you know about him?"

"Can't you see a little thing like that? He's in love, from what you say, so he won't eat much."

Captain Millerton uttered a short word under his breath and strode toward the door for shipmasters only. Barker was always laying for him like that; getting him friendly and confidential and then turning on him. The chief engineer was now entering the building by another door, very pleased with himself.

One of the things Captain Millerton, in his preoccupation with the accumulating of money, had overlooked was the establishment of an invisible barrier between himself and his crew. He had an irrepressible habit of familiarity that was to him a curse and to the ship's company an easy way of access to him for presenting their innumerable grievances. Here was a case in point, when he arrived behind the great counter where his articles were lying and confronted a sullen-looking object leaning against the outer edge and shepherded by Mr. Barker. The coal trimmer's discharge book lay open, and Captain Millerton, entering the details on the articles, noted the man's name was Earle Marquis and that he had been serving on the *Campania*. Some facetious evil spirit lured the captain to wonder audibly why the man didn't call himself a duke and have done with it. Earle Marquis, who had been uninterruptedly intoxicated for two days and was now feeling very weak and purged of the grossness of the flesh, showed a tendency toward dignity at the comment on his patrician name and demanded to know if the captain was accusing him of having another man's discharge book.

"It's more than possible," said the captain, who never lacked courage when the width of the Board of Trade counter was between him and his foe. "However, we'll suppose it's yours. *Campania*—h-mm. Well," he added, writing quickly and turning the articles round for the man to sign, "you're joining the *Candleshoe* and you can say you've been on two fine ships."

Earle Marquis, who was making a wobbly mark in lieu of his name, possibly from modesty, did not entirely understand what the old man was gassing about and felt too sick to find out. But he resented the implications he suspected, and he arrived on the *Candleshoe* that evening staggering under a dirty bag of clothes, charged with a vague dislike of his new captain, and a desire accentuated by a mixture of alcohol and communism to

cause trouble when convenient to himself. Fortunately for his peace of mind, Captain Millerton did not know what a treasure he had secured. He dismissed the matter and went to a telephone to call Mr. George Harkelaw.

"Captain, I'm very much obliged to you," said that young gentleman, when he received the news. "It's quite providential, I can assure you. I'll send him along to you in the Queen's Dock."

"He can sign on on board, but he had better join this evening if he can get his gear down by that," said the captain.

"Certainly, certainly. He'll be down. I'll see to it. And a successful voyage, Captain!"

Mr. George Harkelaw rang off and left the office at once. As has been remarked, he was a literary character with every chance of achieving considerable fame for his stories of west of Scotland life and particularly for a book called *The Black Stane,* wherein he had brought to life the semi-barbaric era of the Highland clans. George was looking toward the stage, however, and was writing a play, like a good many other young Scotsmen of those days.

But George was occupied with another matter by reason of his inherited altruism. George did not take to humanity in the mass as exemplified in his father's fancy for slum children. Indeed, George had irritated his father very much when he once whimsically suggested jailing the owners of slums instead of giving holidays to slum children. But he was a young man of strong affections, and his imagination had been captured by the misfortune of the old school friend whom he was now on his way to see.

James Wishart was a sharp contrast to the heir of the Harkelaw fortune. The two had been at school at Edinburgh, but old Mr. Wishart had suffered some reverses of fortune with the changing times, and while the Harkelaws moved up to Scotstoun Hill and the summer home in Bute, the other family were still living over the second-hand bookshop at the University end of Sauchiehall Street, which shop was Mr. Wishart's precarious means of a livelihood. James had been destined for the ministry or a professorship, but when it became plain there would be pinching at home to carry him through he took affairs in his own hands, gave up his studies, and obtained employment as a tracer in the drafting room of a large engineering works. And then, that being but a poorly paid business at

best, he boldly went to sea. It was at this time that he met, between voyages to Caen for iron ore, a girl named Maria Chisola, one of the numerous Italian colony in Glasgow, whose father kept a flashy ice-cream parlour near the music hall at the eastern end of Sauchiehall Street and was continually in trouble with the police for selling liquor on Sundays, dispensing it from teapots to the Renfield Street rakes and their girls. She was a fine-looking little piece, as they said around the bars there, and it was not surprising that Jamie Wishart, a quiet studious lad, should be carried away. The unusual part of the affair was that Maria was carried away too. James was miserably certain—and he was right—that Maria changed while he was out east. At first she loved him. And he, though his parents might mourn, considered himself the luckiest man alive.

This was when he was twenty-two and she was twenty. She was a black-haired, black-eyed Sicilian, small, like an old ivory statue of Euphrosyne, her red mouth always smiling. She was like a tropical flower blooming in that gray northern city of shawled heads and heavy clouts. On her dark head she wore a scarlet tam o' shanter. To Jamie Wishart, a close-bred young gentleman with a pious mother, Maria Chisola was the very spirit of romance. Maria's father held a different opinion of her, but he saw an advantage in getting her betrothed to so respectable a young man as Jamie. And when James signed on for a two-year stretch on the *Phaleron,* outward bound for the Bombay-Calcutta coal trade, they were engaged, and he had promised to send her half his pay, for her to bank against the day he was to come home and marry her.

This arrangement derived from Jamie's idealistic and sentimental character. It was natural for him to put implicit faith in anyone he loved. He felt that if he could not trust Maria with a few dirty pound notes he would rather let them go.

He was lanky and somewhat uncertain in his manner when he went away, his brown eyes and reddish-brown hair giving a touch of colour to his serious mouth and pale cheeks, and he had a habit of bending his head courteously when he spoke, touching his temple in a meditative fashion with his finger, as though he were testing the value of his thoughts as he uttered them. When he returned he still had that trick, though he spoke but seldom; but his body and his character seemed to have become sturdier and less self-conscious, and his face was tanned with the sunlight of the Indian Ocean. But what happened to his heart when he

found that Maria was married and gone, nobody knew where, the shop in new hands and Chisola himself under some shameful indictment, James did not divulge. He did not even reproach his parents when he knew they had kept the news out of their letters to spare him the misery of what he could not remedy.

To George Harkelaw, however, he turned for the sympathy and understanding that even parents cannot give. George, hunting first editions on Mr. Wishart's upper shelves, was the first to see his early friend come into the shop on his return when the *Phaleron* docked after her two-years' time charter, and the cruelty of the blow made a vivid impression on him. At first it seemed that James had lost his wits. He sat and sat as in a trance, staring at nothing. All that he had of her was her scarlet tam she had left one day in the house. He was going over the times he had had out east, dreaming of an incredible felicity to come. He was too young to believe that such an experience, so finely drawn out, and so exquisitely adjusted to agonize the heart, could be only a prelude to unimaginably greater spiritual adventures. When he told George Harkelaw, "I'm finished, George. I'll never believe a single human soul again," he was only human and young in his lack of vision of the future. Strangely enough, his first reaction was the same as Captain Millerton's when he encountered the extraordinary good fortune of gaining seventeen hundred pounds. Jamie had lost about one hundred pounds and his faith, and at first he meditated a life consecrated to money-making. There was, he told George, nothing else to live for, and asked his friend to get him some commercial position in the office.

But George knew his friend too well and was too idealistic himself to hear of such a plan. He made him go to the engineering school and pass for his second-class certificate. And then he urged him to keep on going to sea. He preached this to old Mr. Wishart too, since the elderly bookworm, still toiling over his monumental three-volume work on the *Ballads and Songs of the Lowlands,* was minded to ask his son to leave the sea and come into the shop.

The fact was that George sensed, in the movement and diversity of sea life, something he himself had missed yet valued highly, and he nursed a conviction that James Wishart needed that experience in order to find himself, rather than the comparative confinement of bookselling. He suspected, too, that James would find the hard toil of the engine room better adapted

to keep him in condition than the other sedentary occupation.

"I might as well," admitted James as they walked abroad one day. "I cannot live in the house. It's strange that a large house can seem smaller than a wee cabin on a tramp, but it's the truth."

"And do you not miss the regularity?" asked George who was not a literary artist for nothing.

"I do that, George. I never thought of it in exactly that light, but the regularity, as you call it, leaves a man's mind free to think his thoughts. But all I want now is to get a bit put by."

"That's very foolish," said George. "Anybody would think you were seventy years old instead of twenty-four. You have a career to make."

"At what?"

"Well, James, do you not think Harkelaw, Frazer & Govanlock a good thing for the future, or do you think we're going on the rocks? When you have your chief's ticket, now——"

"Aye, I'd come to you for a job all right. But I've no heart for careers. That's all dead."

And yet, when George Harkelaw came into the shop and, seeing James reading in the sitting room behind, called out that he had a job for him, a voyage to the West Indies, James allowed his face to show how the news interested him.

"To where?" he asked, laying down the book.

"Havana, perhaps Belize, and a port in Costaragua, a new place, Puerto Balboa," said George.

"Havana, eh? And you say I've to get on board to-night? You must be that anxious to be shut of me!"

"It's the best thing that can happen to him," said George to Mrs. Wishart, who objected. "He's been home three weeks now. It's only a two-and-a-half-months' trip. We can see about a second's job for you when you're back."

"I'll go," said James. They both spoke with that musical deliberation common among the educated men of their race, a speech that is merely lampooned and polluted by eccentric spelling. After James had said "I'll go," neither of them made any further reference to the business.

"Mrs. Wishart, James will take dinner with me this evening, if you don't mind. I've a word or two to say to him that young ladies shouldn't hear."

Mrs. Wishart was young enough to be gratified at this allusion to herself. She smiled. She was forty-three, a neat spare dame

with her hair drawn back in a prim bun from a sensitive pale face. And she knew enough of George Harkelaw to doubt whether his conversation was ever sufficiently dreadful to exclude ladies of any age. To her the tragedy that had overwhelmed Jamie was a source of secret comfort. She didn't want any of those black-eyed, pushing, organ-grinding Italians in the family. If she had her way, she would have them deported. It was a merciful providence the hussy had run away with no more than a hundred pounds. She'd be begging her bread yet, mark that!

Nevertheless, it was well enough Mrs. Wishart was not present when George and James foregathered that evening in the former's bachelor apartment on Bath Street. It was here that he did his writing in his spare time and entertained his friends among the actors and actresses from the theatre where he hoped some day to have a play of his own put on the boards. George, because of the generous allowance that had permitted him to see London and the capitals of Europe, had arrived at some sort of estimate of his own powers, and the difference between him and James was far more than two years of time. James was diffident and contemptuous of many worthy things, and he had no belief that he himself was of any use or importance whatever. George had too much humour to include himself among the great or the geniuses, but he had sufficient confidence to put his abilities to the touch. He would have reckoned himself a poor Scotsman if he didn't have a shot at it. He suspected his friend James Wishart had plenty of "ability," as he called it, but no particular "bent." He was romantic, George was sure, and might do something if he ever found himself in a favourable situation. The trouble with him, apart from his unfortunate love affair with that red tam wench, was that you never could tell what he was thinking about. George had strong opinions and expounded them. Like many other shrewd Scotsmen, he took kindly to Bernard Shaw, who was at that time coming into prominence as a wearer of flannel shirts and Harris-tweed suits in the theatre. He perceived at once that Shaw was merely the old familiar spectacle, a penurious Scotsman rising to fame in London. And later, when two actors and an actress dropped in at George Harkelaw's rooms to spend an hour or so after the theatre, the talk turned to *Captain Brassbound's Conversion,* which one of them had seen in London. George did not think sufficient allowance was made for the influence on a man's character brought about by living in foreign places and in unusual circumstances. He cited Cap-

tain Millerton as example of what he called "atrophied sensibilities."

"That's your new skipper, Jamie," he added to his friend, and he told the visitors that James was sailing in the morning for foreign parts.

"A splendid life!" exclaimed the girl warmly. "I envy you!"

"This is a very severe test I am putting you to, Miss Erskine," warned George, smiling. And seeing she did not catch his drift he added, "Ninety-nine girls out of a hundred would have asked Mr. Wishart if he couldn't take them with him as stewardess. It's an almost universal weakness of women, to think it pleases a seafaring man to have them along. As a stewardess!"

Miss Erskine coloured and bit her lip. She had been on the point of uttering that very sentiment, but of course facetiously.

"There's nothing I should like better," she protested.

"It's not so splendid," muttered James, looking at her timidly. "All work, and no walk up the street when you've stood your watch."

"Ah, but the foreign ports!" she argued, smiling at his manner.

"You lay off at anchor in most places these days!" he told her. "Very difficult to get ashore, what with quarantine and such like. I've been to Bombay twenty times, and not been ashore yet," he added, raising his brows as he looked at her.

"Why, that's extraordinary!" she cried. "Nothing could keep me on board. I wonder now, Mr. Wishart, could you not bring me something from wherever it is you are going?"

"What, for instance?" he asked, at a loss.

"Oh, a—a shell or a gourd! Could you not bring me a gourd? A friend of ours has a gourd for holding water, and I'd like one too. You know the things sailors bring home. You might see a parrot."

"But I'm not a sailor," he explained patiently. "I'm an engineer."

Eventually Miss Erskine attained to some dim recognition of the ratings on a tramp steamer and extracted a promise from James to bring her a curio from foreign parts. One of the actors expressed a suspicion that seafaring men might have duties in foreign ports, which evoked so strong an exclamation of assent from James that they all laughed.

When the others were gone and he turned to say good-night

to his friend, George thrust him into a chair and bade him light one more cigarette.

"I must be getting down to the ship," said he.

"James," said George, "you'll not tell your mother, of course, and as for the *Candleshoe,* not a word either, but you may not be back as soon as we thought."

"What's to do?" asked the young man.

"That I cannot say just now," returned George. "I'll tell you this, stick to the ship. Captain Millerton has our entire confidence, and whatever he orders is good enough."

James stared at his friend.

"What on earth are you talking about?" he demanded.

"Just giving you a friendly tip. It will be money in your pocket. Stick to the ship."

"I'll certainly do that," observed James. "I've no wish to lose my ticket."

"All right, then. You'll remember this hint of mine and take your measures accordingly."

Somewhat mystified, James was nearly down to the ship before he began to reflect upon his meeting with Winifred Erskine. Why had he retreated from her advances? He tried to convince himself that it was the way Maria Chisola had behaved, but he knew it was not that alone. "What's the matter wi' me?" he muttered, stepping over the tracks below the iron-ore cranes. Why, for example, had Maria done so mean a thing to him? Surely there must be something wrong with him. That was his queer, loyal way of arguing. He had heard, and read, of men who would have hit up a tremendous affair with an actress, now, if they had had his chances this night. And yet here was he, James Wishart, tumbling over bollards and switches in the Queen's Dock and never even wanted to see her home! He turned over the amazing conjecture in his mind—was he defective, now, by any chance? He had an enormous respect for other men's prowess with women. His shipmates had told him of extraordinary adventures of their own. Wonderful fellows, to go by their words!

It was a fine night, after all, along in the middle of April, and even the grim city of Glasgow was softening to the season. Somehow, even in that maelstrom of water-borne commerce, silhouetted sharply in the hissing blue glare of arc lights along the quays and swinging between the booms of the ships, where the black smoke of newly started fires poured away from the

up-rearing many-coloured funnels, that feeling of spring, of a resurgence in the heart, was perceptible to the young man who peered about for the name *Candleshoe* on the bow or stern of some near-by steamer. He knew she was coaling along here this evening. Even as he saw her, just beyond where he was halted, the notion came to him that he was condemning life half-tried. He saw the wagon of coal spring upward on the hoist as the crane groaned and hissed, and the man with the long pole pull out the pins at the end, and then the roar of the falling coal smote his ears and sent an exultant shudder through his body. And as he clambered up the dirty ladder leaning against the bulwarks of the *Candleshoe,* he muttered to himself, "James Wishart, ye're a awful fool sometimes."

That mood assaulted him again when he went up to Sauchiehall Street to say good-bye to his mother. Tide time was four in the afternoon. The *Candleshoe* was bunkered and ready. James put on a collar for the last time for a few weeks. He remembered George's remarks of the night before, and when he went down into the cabin to sign on he regarded Captain Millerton with attention. The captain looked at him sharply.

"Now, don't be long," came the warning. "No pier-head jumps on this ship. I won't wait, mind."

"All right, Captain, you needn't worry," said James, and hurried away.

It gave him a shock to find Miss Erskine in his father's shop buying an old book. She was standing by the old man, and as she turned her head toward him James saw her fine gallant lines and her exquisite poise, as if for flight, on the high heels of her shapely shoes. He was aware of the firm clasp of her hand as he mumbled he had not expected this pleasure. . . .

"Are you sure it is a pleasure?" she laughed bending her head quickly toward him. "Don't imagine I came to see you, though," she added, and her eyes sparkled with amusement when he said, taken aback, "Did you not?"

Then she explained she was mad about first editions and loved "browsing," as she called it, in old bookshops, and when Mr. Harkelaw told her that the Wisharts had a bookshop along here, why she just had to come and look round. And here she had met him again! she concluded.

"It's extraordinar'," he admitted, noting the beauty of her hands, which were white, and the friendliness of her eyes, which were a particularly dark blue. This made her laugh afresh, so

that he was compelled to remark to himself that her teeth being so fine might be the cause of her continual laughter. James Wishart had never been encouraged to regard himself as a humorist. Old Mr. Wishart now began to descant upon the book she held, which was one of an early four-volume edition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy;* but in no sense the first edition, he was careful to point out.

"My goodness, I couldn't afford that," she told him, but it was evident she wanted to talk to James Junior. "All right, Mr. Wishart, I'll take it for ten shillings."

"Will you not step in and Mrs. Wishart will infuse you a cup of tea?" he said courteously.

Miss Erskine was not in special need of tea at two o'clock in the afternoon, but she accepted the invitation at once. And in those days, before parents had been taught their place, it was inevitable that both Mr. and Mrs. Wishart should sit close about their visitor, it being a slack time of day, and James was unable to exchange a word with her during the drinking of the tea. He had collected the few odds and ends he required from his room and announced he had to go back to the ship.

"I must be going too," said Miss Erskine, springing up to take the opportunity to escape, must to Mrs. Wishart's disappointment, for it gave the dame a thrill to look closely at an "actress woman" and try to detect the stigmata of an ungodly profession. And so, when James had kissed his parents good-bye, he walked out into Sauchiehall Street in the company of Miss Winifred Erskine of the Theatre Royal, and together they went westward as far as Radnor Street.

"This is where I'm staying at present," and she pointed with her umbrella toward a high window across the street.

"I'll wish you good-afternoon," said James soberly. "I must be stepping."

"I hope you'll have a good voyage," she returned, "and don't forget my souvenir, you know."

"No. And where will I send it when I'm back?"

"Oh, I'll give you my address." She took out a card case from her bag and handed him a card with a London address.

"That will always find me," she said. "And I hope you won't forget to write."

The audacity of making an adequate reply to this was beyond James Wishart's powers. He swallowed once or twice, and held

her hand while he gazed clear across Argyle Street to the funnel of a steamer below Finniestoun.

"Ah!" he said at last, letting her go and starting away. "I will that. Good-bye!"

For a moment Winifred Erskine stood at the corner watching a chance to cross. She stole a look in the direction James had taken and knitted her brows. Then she smiled and entered the house where she lived. She was thinking, as she climbed the stair, of what George Harkelaw had told her of his friend's recent disaster. George had laid great stress on the scarlet tam o' shanter. And it was easy for her to convince herself that her own actions were inspired by a womanly and altruistic ambition to turn his thoughts in a happier direction. She was twenty-four, and reasonably successful in emotional rôles, but so far her heart had been more in her profession than in passionate adventures. Her acquaintance among men had been necessarily limited to the more sophisticated types, and it was Winifred Erskine's experience that the broader many men become in their culture and information the shallower a woman will find them as friends. Her life was very much like a sailor's after all, including, she whimsically told herself, being on the beach and getting shipwrecked far from home. And her ideal man, at this time, was neither clever nor wicked. On the contrary, he was capable of an indestructible honesty. Miss Erskine was not a cynic, but she had ceased to associate brilliance with fidelity.

James Wishart had succeeded in stimulating her imagination. She pictured him in distant scenes, in Calcutta, for example, where he had been, and in Havana, whither he was bound. She did not see him in magnificent or commanding situations, of course, because he had made no such impressions upon her. But she did see him in a far-away tropical setting, and in that setting he was thinking, surrounded as he was by seductive and unscrupulous "native types," of her, at home.

Anyone can perceive how reasonable such a dream appeared to a clever and capable girl earning as much per week as James Wishart earned per month. And as no one knew anything about it save Miss Erskine herself it was probable the idea would remain with her and send out fresh flowerings in the fragrant and candid purity of her mind.

It was as well for her idealism that she was not "a stewardess" on the *Candleshoe* when that stoutly built but somewhat aged tramp steamer, loaded almost to her summer marks, moved

slowly away from the berth in the Queen's Dock and blended her harsh, deep voice with the treble of the side-wheeler tug that was hauling her into the fairway for the dock gates. James himself was on the tops of the boilers hammering open the main stop valves and trying to dodge the various jets of leaking steam that alternately blistered his body and legs and blew out his hand lamp. To him, after two years in a vessel practically new, and well-found for a distant but money-making time charter, the old *Candleshoe* was something of a revelation. He could hardly believe it possible that any firm would allow their property to disintegrate so deplorably. And his surprise was increased when, coming out upon the top grating and wiping the sweat from his eyes as he laid down the huge wheel spanner he had been using, he saw the chief standing there watching the rise and fall of the low-pressure tail rod and noting, without any perceptible emotion, the steam escaping around the scored and pitted rod. It seemed at once superfluous to report the multiplicity of defects in the darkness of the boiler room, and when he did so the chief favoured him with a comprehensive glare.

"Is that so?" he remarked sarcastically. "They must have been overlooked somehow."

"It's a shut-down job," James said without showing resentment. He picked up his wheel spanner and descended the ladder.

It was not long before he became aware of the atmosphere of the ship. James was not an interfering sort of man at any time, and he was not inclined to make undue capital out of the inevitable disorder of sailing day. But the sight of Mr. Punshon, the chief mate, helter-skeltering across the forecastle in pursuit of a seaman who was still in his shore clothes and extremely drunk, the bawling of the captain toward the poop, where Mr. Harris, the second mate, was in trouble with his ropes, and finally the eccentric behaviour of Mr. Humphries, the second engineer, who stood in a condition of ominous silence and solemnity by the handles down below, a leak from the intermediate pressure gauge flicking past his nose as he stared, with watchful yet unseeing eyes, into the maze of machinery. James Wishart was destined to become very well acquainted with that expression of Mr. Humphries. In the mess room it was maintained as a polite fiction that the second engineer was perfectly sober. It almost seemed to James that the chief, Mr. Barker, was watching him carefully, to detect in him any suspicion that Mr. Humphries

was anything else but perfectly sober. As for the second engineer himself, he carried out his duties with appalling accuracy and deliberation, but it was evident that he did not welcome either conversation or assistance. And this tension in the air, this hushed attitude of all the rest of the engine room staff, gave James Wishart a strange feeling, as though he were in the presence of a secret society to whose councils he had not the password. He did not resent it, however, but went about his own work steadily and as well as he could with his scanty knowledge of the ship's connections. A watch or two would see him safely into the mysteries. At tea time the chief came down and sent him up to eat, and he saw the black bulk of Dumbarton Rock on the beam and a yacht fitting out at Denny's yard. He saw the captain on the bridge with the pilot and Mr. Punshon coming along from the cabin, picking his teeth with a sharpened match. And then he saw, for the first time, the steward of the *Candleshoe* and paused to consider the diverse aspects of seagoing humanity.

He might easily have escaped from a museum, for he had the appearance of something stuffed and incongruously endowed with movement. He was a costeno, a man from the hot lands along the coast, and his skin was of a soiled brown tint derived from a crossing of the common soldiers of the Spanish armies of occupation with the gentle Indians of the Caribbean littoral. Other blendings there were in him, of trading Chinamen and lusty African slaves from Belize. He was a small-made man with a tendency toward womanishness in his proportions, but his face was an oblong convex plane, save where his nose, projecting like a long, smooth dorsal fin, continued the slope of his simian forehead. It was no more than a lugubrious episode in that unlovely expanse of feature. His eyes were large and brown with brilliant whites, and out of them looked the eternal questing anguish of the half-breed. The large lips were eloquent of an undisciplined and moody sensuousness. He stared at the passing shore line, the houses whose windows seemed to be watching the *Candleshoe* gliding smoothly out upon the broad bosom of the tide, his head sunk somewhat on his breast, an old billycock hat that had once belonged to Captain Millerton on his head. Everything that the steward, Rafael Alvarez, owned had belonged to Captain Millerton, and Rafael Alvarez himself was, to a great degree, the property of Captain Millerton.

But James Wishart, looking at the strange figure on the poop, did not know that and was merely startled by the womanish figure in the apron. The steward's eyes, following a slow-moving coasting steamer, came at last to rest upon the engineer below him, and an extraordinary smile spread over his melancholy features. He took his cigarette from his mouth and made a gesture of friendly recognition. More surprised than ever, the young man acknowledged the salute and turned to find the mess boy approaching him.

"Supper, Mister." James Wishart went along and descended to the engineers quarters.

"One day's fresh meat is all he carries," whispered Larry the mess boy from behind his hand. "Salt meat comes on this table the day after to-morrow."

"Extraordinar'," admitted his listener, and Larry gave him a sharp look.

"You don't believe me, I can see. You wait."

What James might have said, only he refrained, was that salt meat might easily be more tender than the formidable steak he was trying to masticate. But he made no remark, and Larry proceeded to reveal the source of the trouble, which was that the skipper couldn't trust the steward, who was a dago. They were forever in disagreement about the stores. But the owners made the old man carry this black scut, and it was the engineers and firemen got the dirty end of the stick.

There seemed no particular reason, since he went on without either approval or reproof from his listener, why Larry should ever stop. James Wishart's native caution and his own personal habit of reticence forbade him being drawn into any expression of opinion. Moreover, he was not interested. He was thinking of something other than his food or the squabbles of the ship's pantry. He was wondering, indeed, what lay ahead of him, now he had overcome the first awful feeling of despair and humiliation which had submerged him when he came home and found his last batch of letters to Maria Chisola unopened because Maria had vanished from the scene. He was aware of a hard and bitter place in his breast, and it troubled him. But as the *Candleshoe* glided seaward he discovered his interest in life returning. He became aware of the peculiar tension existing on board, and he remembered George Harkelaw's cryptic counsel to stay by the ship. He wondered how much of the future the

others knew. James felt sure Captain Millerton did not suspect his new third of knowing anything.

But the mess boy's idle chatter rebounded from a vigorous yet unoffending silence. James preferred to form his own opinions, and when formed he would probably keep them to himself. He preserved his laconic behaviour even during the morning watch, when the ship was lifting gently in the freshening wind coming up the Firth, and he struggled doggedly with bilge pumps that would not draw and boilers uncertain in their response to his handling of the feed checks, while the men on the fires sprawled in foul misery against the bunker doors as the fumes of liquor left them languid and without hope.

That was a bad watch, he recalled later, and the worst of the whole four hours was the rousing of Mr. Humphries at four o'clock. For Mr. Humphries was as much like a dead man as anything James Wishart had ever encountered. The magnificent balance and poise of the day were gone. He lay as he had collapsed gently on his settee at eight o'clock, when the chief had relieved him, his soiled clothes rucked and bunched about his body, his head fallen back and his mouth open in a dreadful similitude of death. His cabin held the odour of a charnel house, and a tumbler containing whisky stood miraculously overhanging the edge of the drawer top where his wavering hand had left it. And the chaos of the place, the clothes lying in all directions, the bowler hat, with the crown bashed in, floating delicately in the wash basin half full of black water, the gaping suitcase on the bunk, and the opened drawers of the bureau, gave an impression that there had been some frightful struggle in which an unknown assailant had been victorious and Mr. Humphries had been flung there with ruthless ferocity. Even this spectacle failed to elicit more than a murmur from the third engineer, who had seen, without participation, the exploits of his shipmates on the Indian coast. It was five o'clock before the second could be persuaded to climb totteringly to the fresh air of the deck and swallow the hot coffee James brought from the galley. He stared over the rim of the mug at the gray-green mound of Ailsa Craig looming in the dawn, while James went below to take a look at things in general.

"Is she all right?" asked Mr. Humphries, when James reappeared. James alluded temperately to some of the difficulties he had encountered since midnight, but thought she'd take no harm for "a few minutes." He was smoking an old briar pipe.

This, to him, was the hour he found most serviceable to his soul. The watch done, a mug of coffee on the hatch, and his pipe drawing well, he had been accustomed to contemplate the Indian Ocean and dream of what he now saw had been a merely imaginary future. He seated himself sideways on the hatch, and Mr. Humphries stole a look at him.

The second engineer was a man of thirty who would not have recognized his own portrait taken ten years before. It was not that he seemed older, but rather changed from one classification of humanity to another lower down in the estimation of the world. He sat hunched over his knees, one hand holding the mug of coffee at a negligent angle, the other a cigarette already yellowed and soppy with saliva. His face, pallid from the eternal twilight of engine rooms, and sprouting a heavy blue-black growth of bristles, was that of a man who had resigned from the race for the great prizes of life under the pressure of more immediate passions and duties. His expression was gloomy, and it may be supposed he cherished a certain degree of remorse for his condition, yet in his truculent jaw and unwinking black eyes, under their black brows, was a hint of calculated disdain, as well as a subtle suggestion of being in possession of his faculties in spite of himself. This was true, for he suddenly set the mug down half empty and moved along the deck, to swing himself out of sight, with the celerity of custom, into the engine room. After a few minutes he came up again, wiping his hands on a piece of gray waste, and went on with his coffee.

"You're wastin' valuable time, Mister," he remarked in a hoarse tone, for James Wishart was tranquilly contemplating the wondrous colours of the dawn coming up over the hills of Ayrshire.

"Well, I'm not often asleep before six," said the third.

"You've been out east, they tell me."

"Aye. Time charter with a coolie crew," replied James. "I was two years on the coast."[2]

"Well, you've put your head into chancery comin' into these bloody packets," muttered the second, setting down his mug empty and putting a cigarette in his mouth.

"I'll make it do," said James softly. "There's always work, wherever you sign on. 'Twould not take much to set this job in condition, I'm thinkin'."

"She's a wreck!" said the second, raising his voice. "I've been workin' my flamin' soul out with her, and the more I do the more

there is to do. She's seventeen years old, and a ship is like a woman. When she gets that age you never know *what* you'll find out about her."

"H-m," said James, uncertain of how to accept this wide-armed fling. "'Tis a pity the evaporator does not work well. She primes, I notice, so I shut her off. It's very bad for old boilers."

"The chief tells the office that every trip, and that son of a Chinese tallyman, Govanlock, tells him the engineers don't understand how to work it properly!" said the second, getting up to go below. "A lot he cares. She's made a fortune for them, and she can prime herself to hellangone now. It's us, us, who have to work her, not him, the stingy buzzard!"

"You'd be better employed keeping your watch in the engine room instead of shouting all over the deck, Mister Humphries," called a voice from aft. At first, the two engineers looked about for the location of this new protagonist. Even while the second expressed an opinion that he didn't need to be told his work, James Wishart's eyes scanned the poop in vain. To him it was like a voice from the deep, for he could see no one on deck. And then he made out the face of Captain Millerton at his porthole in the break of the poop. He looked singularly impotent there—a face in a brass ring like a frame. He was no more alarming than a softly tinted miniature.

"And keep your cock-and-bull stories about the office to yourself instead of waking up everybody on the ship," he continued, spoiling the threatening nature of his words by scratching his neck.

"I'll lay a sovereign you weren't sleepin', Skipper," muttered Mr. Humphries, turning toward the poop. "More likely thinkin' out how to save on the grub." And he laughed hoarsely, "Ho-ho!"

"Whatever you got would be more than you were worth," came from the porthole as the captain's face withdrew.

"I've done more for this perishin' ship than you ever did!" yelled the second. His head was sunk between his shoulders, and he seemed about to rush toward his invisible enemy. The voice came again, telling him to get below, get below, get below.

"Ah, I'll get below!" growled Mr. Humphries, turning with ferocious bloodshot eyes toward James Wishart, who was seated on the hatch looking toward the sunrise. The second's gaze fell

on the empty mug. He seized it and flung it hard against the bulwarks.

"I'll get below!" he repeated in a snarl and really did reach the engine-room door.

"I'll log you for that!" The captain's face appeared suddenly at his window again, thrust forward. The second waved an arm and vanished.

It seemed to James, sitting stolidly through this surprising scene, that the heavy mug smashing to dazzlingly white particles against the dull gray bulwarks had some profound symbolical significance, for at that moment the sun's disk rose above the distant hills and shot a bright beam along the sea. Moreover, there came a white silence after the dark clamour of the quarrel, and James, easing himself gently from the hatch, knocked out his pipe and made his way to his cabin, behind the reverberating engine-room bulkhead. He maintained an air of steady quietude, his eyes downcast, as though he were declining to argue even to himself, and lay down to sleep for a couple of hours. And for a while he forgot, in the oblivion of that deep slumber, the problems that confronted him and the tantrums of his shipmates, "the grown-up children of a discontented earth."

CHAPTER II

MR. PUNSHON, the chief mate, who shared the port side of the long poop with the second mate, the steward, and the cook, while Captain Millerton dwelt in solitary and spacious grandeur to starboard, was keeping the middle watch one morning several days later when the helmsman called him in an urgent voice. Mr. Punshon had been looking benevolently at the dark horizon over the tops of green seas swinging in from the westward, a canvas weather cloth drawn between the bridge stanchion up to his eyes, so that anyone looking aft would have beheld him veiled like a Turkish lady. The sudden loquacity of the man at the wheel was startling. Helmsmen often passed their two-hour trick without a sound save an occasional expectoration into the wooden cuspidor which Mr. Punshon had instructed the carpenter to make for their special comfort.

"What is it, Macy?" asked the mate. Mr. Punshon expressed concern by opening his eyes very wide and laying his head on one side.

"She's not steering, sir," said the man. He twirled the wheel and no sound came from the engine in the house below them.

"And she's hard over. Look at her," he added. Mr. Punshon took a serious look round. The *Candleshoe* gave a roll, and he grasped a rail. The ship's head was moving rapidly in a wide circle which had brought her into the trough of the great green rollers. She shipped a sea on the fore deck. Mr. Punshon, thinking deeply, descended to the bridge deck with a hurricane lamp and opened the door of the house just behind the chart room where the steering engine was snuffing noisily but not moving. With one hand on each side of the doorway, Mr. Punshon looked appealingly at the defaulting mechanism. The *Candleshoe* lay over, and a huge wave toppled upon her, and some of it caught Mr. Punshon between the shoulders and sent him asprawl on the engine. The lamp clattered to the deck. At about this time both Captain Millerton and Mr. Barker, the chief, got out of their bunks and wondered what the devil had happened. The

Candleshoe was a rolling ship. The second engineer had been understood to assert she rolled in drydock. She had been fitted with bilge keels too low, with the result that she rolled worse than before, and with a sudden vicious movement that had more than once tumbled the occupants of upper bunks upon the floor. She did this now, and it began to rouse the ship's company. But just as Captain Millerton reached for his trousers the ship ceased to roll. He stood for an instant in thought, muttering, "This beats cock fighting. What does Punshon think he's doing with my ship?" And then, as he put on his slippers, she gave a sickening lurch that flung him on his settee.

He found the chief engineer, a dim figure in green pajamas, by the engine-room hatch.

"I'm goin' to stop," said Mr. Barker.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing much. The steering gear. I've sent the third along to tell the mate."

Captain Millerton found Mr. Punshon holding the lamp for James Wishart to see what he was doing.

"Got it?" asked Mr. Punshon. He was interested. He had been many years at sea with steering engines, but he was as innocent of any knowledge of their mechanism as he was of the Atomic Theory or the Pelagian Heresy. So when the third engineer told him briefly a nut had come loose from the control spindle he was astounded. Mr. Wishart added that if it wasn't washed away he'd find it and put it on. Mr. Punshon looked down approvingly at the doubled-up body of the young man, his face turned up toward the light as he groped for the missing nut.

"Aye," said James. "I've got it. Show a light, Mister."

"The chief says he's going to stop!" said the captain.

"There'll be no need, I'm thinking," said James. And he suggested the man at the wheel get the rudder straight. The steering engine suddenly began revolving at great speed and with a thunderous noise in that small iron chamber. He came out and closed the door.

Returning with his tools, James told the chief what he had done, and surmised that the shore hands had left the key out of that nut.

"I'll get a pin and put it in at four o'clock," said he.

"Better do it now," remarked Mr. Barker. "I'll stay by her. It's nearly four o'clock."

He was still there when the captain, having seen the *Candles-*

hoe on her course, came along on his way to the cabin. He held up his trousers with one hand, while with the other he sought waveringly for the hand rail. He struck the chief engineer, in the sharp clear light that precedes the dawn, as being remarkably like a disreputable night prowler caught in the act and escaping down a wind-swept street. No dignity at all, thought the chief, who was not overburdened with that virtue himself just then.

"A thing like that shouldn't happen, Chief," said the captain suddenly, pausing at the ladder leading aft.

"Ah, but you see, it did happen," replied Mr. Barker with ponderous irony.

"Might have been serious. Said yourself you were going to stop."

"To please you," explained the chief, nodding his head and speaking through his teeth.

"How would it do that, Chief?" demanded Captain Millerton.

"Think of the pleasure you'd have, logging a breakdown at sea, owing to defective steering gear, eh? My word, do you think I don't know?"

"Rot, rot!" cried the captain. "Why don't you talk sense?"

"Well, you did it before, you know. And you always make a mountain out of a molehill anyhow. You can't help it. It's your nature."

"Pshaw!" Captain Millerton strode away aft, holding up his trousers, and disappeared into his quarters. James Wishart, returning from the steering engine, found his chief laughing to himself.

"Call the second," said Mr. Barker. "I want to tell him what the old man said." James was about to descend obediently when a sailor lumbered along the deck from the bridge.

"The mate says the wheel's all right now, he says," the man muttered, and turned away.

"Did he now?" exclaimed Mr. Barker softly and laughing. "Fancy that! Look, Mister Wishart. See this?" The chief pointed at the sailor as though he were an exhibit in a museum. "This is what they make skippers of!"

James made no comment, and after calling the second he went down below to finish his watch. About ten minutes later Mr. Humphries, looking more like a human being, but still resembling a truculent automaton, rose up out of the scuttle and nodded to the chief.

"Mister, why did you leave the pin out of that gear?" asked the chief crisply. "Or didn't you? We nearly had her on her beam ends."

"I told you before, the nut's that slack she shears the pins off herself," snapped the second. "It's a left-hand thread, and it was put on the repair list to renew, and your great friend, Mister Charles Alexander Everlasting Govanlock, crossed it off. I wonder if that damn galley's got any coffee," he added meditatively.

"That's what I thought. But I nearly made him stop the ship. The third was too quick for me."

The second grunted and lighted his eternal cigarette. He began to speak with great distinctness and emphasis, as though the draught of smoke he had just inhaled and shot through his nostrils had awakened a fresh and superior personality within him. It was as though he had been acting and now assumed his own likeness again.

"I'll tell you, Mister, there's goin' to be trouble this trip. The condenser tubes are leakin' like a basket. I have to blow a boiler down every day. Eh? What's that you say? Sawdust? Yes, I've put in a bag of it, and it holds her there. But they fill up every day. The boilers are gettin' so's I'm afraid to look at the salinometer. I'm saying you'll have to open up the big doors in Porto Balboa—or even Havana."

"There'd be a stink if I delayed the ship in Havana," said Mr. Barber.

"There'll be a bigger stink if you have to stop at sea to do it," retorted Mr. Humphries, and stepping over to the galley he received a cup of coffee and disappeared with it into the engine room.

Mr. Barker, who knew perfectly well all that the second had just told him, took a turn along the deck. He was, like most men of the sea who sleep during the afternoon watch, troubled with insomnia. Often in the morning, when he heard the lad making coffee, he would descend the ladders to the starting platform and talk in a desultory querulous fashion with the man who had lain beside him through that flabbergasting night at Magersfontein, when the damn Dutchmen had poured a never-ending hail of Mauser bullets upon them. They never spoke of those days. Yet they were aware of the bond. When men have marched to war and have ploughed the ocean, their friendship, if it endures, lies very much too deep for speech. It probably

rests so far down in the darkness of reality that it remains independent even of any superficial nobility of character. Neither Mr. Barker nor his second were noble, for that matter. Their attitude, divested of the common amiable conventions of shore life, resembled that of savage yet obedient dogs. It was congenial to their strong, coarse natures to discuss their lives in curt phrases, snarled at each other above the din of the *Candleshoe's* engines, while the dawn flooded the horizon with rose and amber. They stood there in front of the ponderous plunging rods, immersed in the clashing and booming chaos of sounds from ash hoist to shaft alley, divested of those tender sentiments which animate and distract the hearts of common men. At the back of their minds lay an embryo of rebellion against the fate which kept them serving, with a robust and explosive fidelity, a detested allegiance. It was their bond of a turbulent past which united them in the mean squabbles provoked by Captain Millerton's cheese-paring policy. It inspired them with contempt for themselves as well as for him, to be entangled in such despicable affairs.

When he went below Mr. Barker made a remark:

"He's got a street of houses and a hotel and he goes to sea."

"He's scared we'd eat if anybody else was skipper," screamed the second as he started the wash-deck pump.

Mr. Barker looked glumly at the boiler gauges.

"Will that condenser hold till we get to Havana?" he asked.

"No!" shouted Mr. Humphries, with malignant eyes glaring at the chief. "Nothin's goin' right this trip."

CHAPTER III

THE sound of heavy tools falling on iron floors, an occasional shout or growl, the dropping of water from leaking glands and the hiss of auxiliary steam, came up from below. Larry O'Keefe, lounging in the galley, reported that there was hellanall to pay down below. The engineers were all at it, and he had carried down a pot of tea and some sandwiches. The chief had told him to clear out or he'd get killed. It was the condenser, he told the cook, in a superior tone.

"How do *you* know?" asked the cook.

"Why should I not?" snapped Micky. "I worked in Harland and Wolff's yard in Belfast."

"It's a wonder you left," surmised the cook.

"Will you bet a shillin' I'm right?" demanded Larry in a heat.

The cook muttered that it didn't make any difference to *him* what the trouble was; he'd have to get up at five o'clock every morning, just the same. He sat smoking placidly on the clean-scrubbed seat in front of the fire. It was nearly eight, and his work was over. He was bent on getting a tot out of that dago steward presently. A man could do with something on a trip like this.

He was asleep, and the first watch was coming to an end before the great old-fashioned doors of the main condenser had been bolted up again and the three engineers gathered on the starting platform to get the *Candleshoe* under weigh. They were very dirty with the foul, dark red scum that accumulates in condensers, their singlets were torn, and they breathed in gasps in the hot, stagnant air of the engine room. In that old ship, with her small ventilators, to stop in warm latitudes was no joke. The second reached up for a drink from the water can that hung above them, and spurted the water from his mouth into the crank pit. It was hot.

"Well, the beer will be cold," said the chief, tapping the steam gauge. "Mister Wishart, open the funnel damper and chase those two fire boys. We'll wait a bit before we wake up the

officer of the watch!" He spoke the last words with an extraordinary venomous sarcasm. They embodied all the accumulated contempt Mr. Barker cherished for the deck. It was his highest flight of intellectual and emotional expression. For him there were no problems of fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute. He had no thought for civil liberty or national aspirations. The bigotry of religion, the fanaticism of reformers, was transmuted, in Mr. Barker's case, into a ceaseless cold hatred of the other branch of the service. He did not often express it in words, and when he did it could only be identified as hatred by the tones, deliberate and uttered through the teeth as the fine curving moustache twitched at the ends.

Mr. Humphries had not yet reached this perfection of utterance upon the subject. He had less experience, and perhaps less bitterness. Moreover, he had so much frightful toil to take up his time and energy that he had never explored the further recesses of silent hatred. His character led him to take a crude pleasure in yells and violence, expressing himself vividly against the background of sea and sky. To him, his emotions were worthy of being contrasted with the forces of nature. To smash a piece of crockery to smithereens and scream in Captain Millerton's face relieved him. He would subside, go on toiling at his dark and discouraging tasks in the bowels of the ship, and become a coherent human being once more.

And while they glowered at the engines, which gave them so many heartbreaking tasks, the captain's voice was heard at the skylight.

"Any chance of getting away this week, Chief?"

They looked at each other, still breathing deeply in the stagnant air. James Wishart, who was not only the dirtiest and most tired of them all, but would go on watch very soon, came back from the fireroom. He heard the question floating down from above and permitted himself a faint smile.

The chief cocked his eye at the low-pressure piston rod, and seemed to be addressing it.

"You're in a hurry, then?" he asked.

The captain's voice sounded fainter, as though he had withdrawn his head from the skylight. He didn't suppose a little thing like a charter would bother Mr. Barker, but it wouldn't do any harm to get along to Havana.

"Just fancy that!" mimicked the chief to the second. "He's chasin' charters now! Well, we'll have to humour him in his

feverish dreams. Let her go, Mister. And ring full ahead."

When the engines were full away and everything set for the watch, Mr. Barker told James Wishart to go up and have forty winks.

"You're all in, man. I'll sweat some o' the fat off my ribs oilin' the old bitch for a while," he grunted. "But, for Gawd's sake, put this ventilator on the wind when you go up."

The two younger men washed and went up, not forgetting to do as the chief ordered. There was coffee in the galley, and they stood by the rail drinking.

"You're in luck," said Mr. Humphries. "Not many chiefs 'ud do a thing like that, look you."

"Aye, that's true," admitted James Wishart. "I'll take a lie-down on the hatch."

"A man like that's worth stickin' up for," went on the second engineer. His tone implied that in his opinion the third was not sensible of his privileges. But James Wishart was not aware that Mr. Barker needed any support or defense, so he merely nodded and went away, down on the well deck.

The second spat into the sea. "What a life!" he reflected. He had been at sea ten days now and every day had been eleven or twelve hours for him. And every day the food got worse, if possible.

Mr. Humphries had never got on since he had returned from the war. It is a strange thing to say of military discipline, but it creates in the breasts of some men an intolerable spirit of revolt. It seems to embitter them against the very elements of a capitalist system of society. Mr. Humphries had become intractable and difficult. He had moved from one employ to another until Mr. Barker had sent for him. George Harkelaw, who had been a volunteer officer in those days, had suggested to the firm that men with South African service should be tried first. Mr. Humphries came into the employ, and he seemed destined to remain with his friend. He was not sure himself whether he had the temperament for anything else.

He spat again into the sea and stared at the horizon, as though by some chance he should detect, rising above that taut blue line, some new shape of destiny. And he had for a moment, as a low-hung planet caught his derisive eye, the illusion of a fantastic premonition. He turned away, to go below for a few hours' sleep muttering to himself.

"Clear out down there!" he said, and there was a flash of

contempt in his expression at the idea. He jerked his shoulder a little as he thought of Mr. Barker.

"Who'd chuck a chief's billet to run away wi' the likes o' me? Ho! Ho!"

When the *Candleshoe* lay at anchor under the shadow of Morro Castle, and Havana glittered and beckoned across the harbour, James Wishart, leaning his elbows on the rail, discovered in himself no passionate desire to go ashore. To him that siren city was no more than a seductive stranger whose amorous advances he regarded without much enthusiasm. Not so Mr. Humphries. For the first time his black eyes expressed an emotion other than rage or despair. He moved with spirit about his preliminary duties. He even clapped James on the back, saying:

"You're among the perishin' dons now, my boy. Señoritas and bandurrias and bullfights. What ho!" James was not the recipient of much back-slapping. He merely remarked:

"You can have it, for all I care. I think I'll stay aboard."

This suited the second engineer so completely he merely grunted and said no more.

There was the usual disagreeable episode when Mr. Barker informed the captain they wished to draw some money.

"Why, we're only a couple of weeks out," said Captain Millerton fretfully.

"That don't matter, Captain."

"I never drew money in my life, except for stamps to write a letter home," muttered the captain.

"We aren't all as mean as you are, Captain," said Mr. Barker, with the air of explaining a mystery. "If we don't get it, we'll go to the consul and find out why. So it's up to you."

"No wonder you never have anything in the bank," said Captain Millerton, assuming a moral tone.

"You mind your own business, Captain," replied Mr. Barker pleasantly. "We'll be a long time dead, and so will you."

James Wishart leaned his elbows on the rail and allowed his mind to go back to that brief scene in Radnor Street, when Miss Erskine gave him her hand and wished him "a pleasant voyage." Those words sounded ironical now. He recalled the poise of her body as the breeze pressed her skirts against it, and the shining points of her high-heeled shoes. And her voice, he remembered that. It had a timbre unknown to him—the voice of an intelligent and candid spirit trained to express emotions. Now and

again there was a note that jarred upon him, since he had no experience of life behind the stage. Yet it was pleasant to remember, and it occurred to him abruptly that he had a commission to execute. She had asked him to buy her—what was it? A gourd! It was a curious fancy for a fine young lady, but he would have to look round.

It was after supper, and the others were ashore. Mr. Barker and his lieutenant, together with Mr. Harris, the second mate, had taken a shore boat, and James had seen them land at the custom-house quay. He found himself involved in a conversation with Mr. Punshon. James listened absently to the mate's amiable rumble-bumble and decided that the owners had perhaps a charter on the coast in view. Well, George could depend on him to do anything in reason. The old man was a queer bird, but so long as he was master, best to take his orders.

Mr. Punshon was dealing in large generalizations drawn from obscure cases known to himself. His voice sounded like the hum of insects in an old-fashioned garden. As far as James could see, it amounted to about the same thing. The sun had gone down behind the Malecon, and the waters of the harbour were an exact reflection of the clear emptiness of the sky. The city noise was hushed as the landward breeze carried it away. Only an occasional clink and jar from the galley and the deep oratorical voice of Mr. Punshon explaining the disruption of the Scottish churches and the consequent changes of national character as opposed to the Spanish from which these here Cubans were descended, with all their superstitions and so on. James listened deferentially, and added a timely word now and again. He was not interested very strongly, for unrestrained speech was foreign to his character. He was Scotch, and so was Mr. Punshon; yet it was impossible to imagine two men more dissimilar in their temperaments. Moreover, they were at opposite ends of life. James still regarded the dire misfortune that had befallen him as of paramount importance, while Mr. Punshon, who had his three bouncing daughters, whose nice house at Partick had been foreclosed because he had lost his job and couldn't get another one quick enough to pay up on it, and whose chances of ever being anything more than mate of a tramp were not very bright, Mr. Punshon was attaining a point where, to the elderly, nothing can matter very much any more. Mr. Punshon had a violin in his cabin and he was in the habit, in harbour, of inspiring a silent annoyance in the mind of his

commander. The mate's love of music was old-fashioned. He would sit on the cabin skylight and sing "Abide with Me." His voice was the best thing about him. It was full florid baritone, and could be raised to a melodious bellow that reached other ships at anchor. To hear him sing:

"There's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream!"

was a revelation of benevolent sentiment. But he had no illusions himself. He left them to young fellows like James Wishart and Mr. Harris.

Captain Millerton experienced a certain pleasure in seeing the chief and Mr. Humphries being rowed ashore. And when he came up to take the air on the starboard side of the poop, a faint thrill of regret ran through him as he caught sight of the third and Mr. Punshon on the after hatch, the latter with his fiddle, on which he was making experimental fantasias based on the theme of "My girl's a high-born lady." The captain's pessimism sometimes called for strange victims. He was uncomfortably aware at times that Mr. Punshon, in spite of his lack of initiative and his comparative failure in life, had resources beyond the reach of his commander. Life was full of fun, the old fellow would remark, and he extracted it from apparently unnegotiable securities. Perhaps his pawky Scots intuition told him that the captain would have snubbed his initiative, had he revealed any. Old sailors have a profound and pathetic cunning of their own.

As for young Wishart, Captain Millerton was aware already of a strength of character and a reticence of speech which seemed neither to call for reproof nor to welcome approval. The captain, while glancing in their direction and telling himself that such exemplary behaviour always blew up in a jamboree at some inopportune part of the voyage, suddenly wondered whether George Harkelaw had wished this young man on him at the last moment to keep an eye on things and perhaps report what was going on. Was that the real reason for his unusually circumspect behaviour?

This conjecture flooded the captain's mind with doubt and suspicion. James did not even drink. The steward Rafael Alavarez, in answer to the captain's glance of inquiry, shook his cigarette-stained finger in front of the long, curving ridge of his nose—the nose which gave him the appearance of some-

thing exhumed from Sumarian detritus, while his eyes, large and with brilliant whites like bismuth, made him resemble those faces, with an expression of indestructible intelligence, painted on the casings of mummied Pharaohs. Did not even drink. The theory that James might not only be there to report, but might even have some official standing in the plans following the transfer of the *Candleshoe* gained ground in the captain's mind as he glanced again at the scene on the hatch. He turned away as he formed a resolution to admit nobody on board to the real facts behind the raising of the coffee-coloured flag, with its crimson portcullis, which he called the Yellow Duster, on the *Candleshoe*. And he made up his mind petulantly to keep an eye on the third, as he put it, in case. And illogically enough, although the agents, Barinas & Co., had sent him a letter asking him to come ashore that evening, he had declined, and now nursed a belief that the negotiations had fallen through in London and nothing would happen after all.

But James was not thinking about the future. He was merely meditatively adjusting his mind to a new and not unpleasant way of life. With the distant glitter of Havana before his eyes, he was endeavouring to find his position and lay a course. The trouble, he was surprised to discover, was that he had no idea of a destination. Just cruising. He saw how all the essential phases of his life had become dependent for their zest and brightness upon a phantasmal passion for a woman of no worth. For a scarlet tam o' shanter. He had no clear notion, now, of what lay ahead of him. The future, like a clear night over a calm sea, showed no illumination save a faint far distant radiance. This came from the doubtful possibility of meeting Winifred Erskine again. Doubtless because of the hint that, as George Harkelaw had said, he might be away for some time. He thought of her, nevertheless, with pleasure, standing at the corner of the street wishing him a pleasant voyage. Did she mean just that trip in the *Candleshoe*, or something more? A symbolical voyage. The pity of it was that this radiance was so far away, hull down as it were, and might be a mere celestial body such as a man sees on the horizon as he approaches the culminating experiences of his life, when the darkness is shot with tender and confusing gleams of light.

"There's a boat coming off to us, I fancy," said James to Mr. Punshon, who at once finished his performance with a grandiose sweep of the bow and stood up as though to take the

applause that would follow. Nothing of the kind, however, was to be detected on board the boat now approaching the *Candleshoe*. Two gentlemen sat in the stern sheets, while the boatmen gave their undivided attention to bringing the craft alongside the rope ladder that hung from the well-deck rail. Mr. Humphries laid his fiddle and bow gently upon the hatch, made a low-toned allusion to Orpheus and his lute, which James Wishart failed to catch, and stepped quietly to the side. Captain Millerton, sitting on a camp stool with his arms on the rail, contemplating the western heavens, gave no sign that he had noticed anything unusual at all. Nor did Mr. Punshon acknowledge the captain's presence on deck. Indeed, he ignored that gentleman with a slightly formal exaggeration by turning his plump round back upon him. James Wishart, who was not involved in these manœuvres, sat easily upon the hatch and waited for the strangers to come on deck.

The resonant voice of the chief officer was heard contending with singularly harsh and peremptory tones from the boat. Mr. Punshon registered inquiry, astonishment, irony, humour, and regret, all in a booming baritone, while the harsh voice below demanded whether a civilized person was expected to clamber up a filthy rope affair instead of the accommodation ladder he saw lashed against the bridge rail. "Like a damned monkey, hey? Where is the captain of this confounded ship? Call the captain, somebody. Look here, you, can't you understand my business is important? This chap here is from Barinas' office; your agents, you know. I suppose you can understand English, hey? I say, my good fellow . . . Oh, confound!"

Mr. Punshon, looking over the bulwarks, saw that the protesting and irascible person was coming up the rope ladder after all, not without issuing furious instructions to the chap from Barinas' office to hold the damned thing as steady as he could. Pah!

James Wishart saw a pair of hands in dogskin gloves appear on the bulwarks, followed by a forearm with a great show of starched cuff, and then the gentleman's face, surmounted by a large black hat. A yellow cane with a gold finial was hooked to the elbow, and one of the exasperated blue eyes regarded Mr. Wishart through a monocle.

It is not possible to ascend a jiggling rope ladder, climb over a dirty rail, and descend to the deck without foregoing some dignity. Yet the newcomer, arrayed as he was in very fine

clothes and wearing a cloak with a velvet collar instead of a light overcoat, managed to convey even to Mr. Punshon that the accommodation ladder should have been lowered on this occasion. His moustaches and tapering beard gave him a slightly Spanish air, though his speech was sufficient to identify him as English. His manner, too, of looking round as though the ship and its crew were his private property, though he didn't think very much of them at that, was familiar to James, who had met expatriated Englishmen out east.

The stranger swung round upon Mr. Punshon, appeared to meditate running him through with his cane, thought better of it, and turned to the ship's side.

"Come up," he ordered. "Why on earth don't you come on up? Tck! Tck! Waiting down there!" He tapped the cane smartly on the deck.

The ladder was heard to vibrate vigorously against the ship's side as the employee of Barinas' office scrambled up in obedience to this order. Then he too appeared, in a suit of fashionable Spanish stripe, with tremendous lapels and a notable satin cravat—a small, brown young gentleman with a deferential manner.

"Now," said the other briskly, turning on Mr. Punshon, his cane over his shoulder as though about to cleave the chief officer in twain, "Where's your captain, my good fellow? The name is Perkins, tell him. And look here," he added suddenly to his companion, "just tell those two blighters in the boat that if they don't stay here until I am ready to go back on shore, I'll kill them."

Captain Millerton, during this conversation, very little of which he had missed, now strolled away to the far side of the poop and affected a profound interest in the dark ominous bulk of the Morro Castle outlined against the fading light. So Mr. Punshon, after clearing his throat, stroking his chin, and looking at James Wishart as though debating the chances of passing him off as the captain, advanced slowly toward the poop ladder and ascended it in search of his commander.

"Gentleman named Perkins wants a word with you, Cap'en," said the mate. "Shall I show him into the cabin?"

"What's he want?" muttered Captain Millerton.

"Well, as a matter of fact, he said he wanted to see you sir," rumbled Mr. Punshon.

"I'm not going to buy anything, mind. No curios, no insur-

ance, no firearms, no fruit, and no stores," said the captain without turning round. He was afraid that even the unobservant Punshon might notice his eagerness.

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Punshon, and he ambled back to the gentleman who was informing James Wishart that Havana was a perfectly damnable place.

"If you'll step into the saloon, sir, the captain will see you, though he isn't needing to buy anything this evening."

"Buy anything!" Mr. Perkins fixed his monocle and stared at the mate. "Buy anything? So he thinks I'm a—a bally runner, does he? You gave him that impression, did you? Well, lead on. If you chaps had any brains I don't suppose you'd be sailors. Lead on. Lead on."

Mr. Wishart, holding his pipe some few inches from his lips, watched the procession advance toward the poop with considerable curiosity. They disappeared down the main scuttle and were followed by Captain Millerton. It was not long before Mr. Punshon came back and gathered up his fiddle and bow. Mr. Punshon was inclined to make enigmatic rumbling noises accompanied by a rapid blinking of his merry blue eyes.

"Hoomph! M-m-mphm!" he remarked. "And what do you think of that?" he asked James, who shrugged his shoulders.

"Who's the queer feller?" he asked without violent interest.

"I couldn't say, Mister Wishart, but I can tell you he isn't going to get any change out of the old man."

"No, I should say not," agreed the third engineer, standing up and knocking out his pipe against the hatch coaming.

It was at this moment, at the turn of the evening, when the minds of seamen become most languid and relaxed, that the two men simultaneously observed Rafael Alvarez, the steward, appear on the poop, dressed to go ashore. They were astonished to see him go to the open skylights and close them gently before advancing with a tolerant smile toward the ladder.

"Hoomph! Dirty work at the crossroads, my young friend," observed Mr. Punshon, turning away. The steward leaned on the rail and spoke in Spanish to the men in the boats. They replied that they awaited the two senors who had ascended the ladder.

"Ah! Then you have time to take me to the Custom House and return before they need you," responded the steward in a soft clear voice.

The two boatmen, resting easily at length on the thwarts,

turned up piratical-looking faces while they ejected the smoke of cigarillos from their dark flaring nostrils.

"Ho, brother," remarked one of them, and he spat threads of tobacco from his full red lips, "we work for a rich hombre. He has more money than patience." They laughed in unison.

The steward, delicately drawing two pieces of newspaper from his pocket, proceeded to use them as gloves while he quickly descended the dirty rope ladder.

"He will be an hour and more," he informed them. "Much business is going on. Two shillings from me. I have an assignation in the Calle Animas."

The boat shot away amid jovial growls. The two men on deck had a curious sensation of being in close proximity to inexplicable energies and unscrupulous schemes. The Norwegian carpenter, smoking a grotesque meerschaum pipe like a yellow cauliflower, came stumping along to sound the wells, and the notion suddenly crossed Jame Wishart's mind that the life of a seaman was a frustrated tragedy, so many of his contacts are atrophied by companions who are merely humorous or troublesome enigmas. It was like dwelling with well-trained phantoms. As he put it to himself, in homely phrases, "It's a wasted life. We're just pawns in the game." Mr. Punshon seemed suddenly futile, standing there drawing funny little chirrups of sound from his violin. Mr. Punshon knew he was only a pawn in the game too, but he had abandoned the attempt to be anything else. His heart was no longer in the struggle to rise. Chirrup! Chirrup! He began to sing softly:

"How sweet at the close of silent eve,
The harp's responsive sound,
How sweet the vows that ne'er deceive
And deeds by virtue crowned!
How sweet to sit beneath a tree
In some delightful grove,
But, ah! more sweet, more dear to me
Is the voice of her I love!"

James Wishart moved over to the rail and gazed without either longing or repugnance at the city, now enveloped in the mantle of night and crowned with brilliant clusters of lights. It was impossible for him to share the elderly mate's philosophy of life. Resignation was not for a young man who had more than the common store of energy and resource, though he was

not aware of it just then. Yet the song sharpened his feelings of failure in the most significant enterprise of his life. Here one could see heredity and the severe code of an ancient calling modifying the expression of a profound emotion until it was no more than a steady glance at the shore lights. His friend George Harkelaw would have gotten a story or a play out of the experience, no doubt, and over yonder, in Havana, young gentlemen who had been crossed in love were writing poems, fighting duels, and even blowing out their own brains in the street beneath the stony-hearted girl's balcony. All this was denied James Wishart. He merely felt melancholy.

"The frowns of fate I calmly bear,
In humble sphere I move
Content and blest when e'er I hear
The voice of her I love!"

So sang Mr. Punshon, and as though suddenly aware of the darkness, and the silence of his companions, he put his fiddle under his arm and hurried up the poop ladder.

"I'll just put the lady to bed," he murmured and blew a shrill blast on his whistle. A voice sounded from forward, and they heard footsteps.

"Bring a hurricane lamp for the ladder, there," he boomed to an invisible sailor. "Boat coming alongside." And he dived into the saloon scuttle.

The skylights of the cabin now glowed with a softly fluctuating radiance as the lamp swung in a faint epicyclic gyration from the motion of the vessel and the disturbing hand of Captain Millerton as he replaced the globe. The third engineer saw the boat returning from the Custom House. The sailor who was making fast the hurricane lamp to the standing rigging hard by craned his neck and shaded his eyes to make out the craft coming alongside.

"Old man goin' ashore, Mister?" he demanded civilly. James replied that he couldn't say: it was possible. Mr. Punshon appeared at the end of the poop, and the sailor went forward to the galley. The mate wanted to go to his cabin and lie down. He had kept the middle watch on the bridge that morning and had been on his feet most of the day. He was looking forward to reading himself gently to sleep with a back number of the *Family Herald,* of whose fiction he was inordinately fond. He would not have admitted the charge, but Mr. Punshon was

envious of no man. A long life and a merry one was his creed, and let those who craved it have the responsibility of giving him orders. So he hummed a tune and stepped jauntily back and forth until the captain's visitors were pleased to depart.

At length they came on deck. Captain Millerton accompanied them to the poop ladder. James Wishart moved away to the hatch, but he heard the aristocratic Mr. Perkins say emphatically:

"Now, don't let us have any more of this hanky-panky business. I shall expect you to-morrow, Captain. We dine at eight. Sharp!"

He descended the ladder to the deck, tapping each step with his cane before setting his foot on it. The young Cuban from the agent Barinas' office followed him. Together they looked up at Captain Millerton, who was smoking a long cigar.

"I'll come if I can," he replied in a querulous voice. "I'll see how things shape."

"You'd better!" returned the tall person with a monocle, and at once made for the ladder. "Are those blackguards still there? Humph! Just help me up, my good fellow, will you?" Mr. Punshon deferentially eased the visitor to the broad flat rail: "Look out down there!"

An inexperienced observer might have supposed that Mr. Perkins was about to leap into the boat from the rail, so savage was the expression upon his face as he turned toward the lamp in the rigging. Still preserving a look of intense dislike of the whole human race, he lowered himself until the carbuncle in his cravat was glowing just above the top of the ladder.

"Look here, Captain, I don't perform this trick again, mind you. You get that gangway rigged up for me when I come on board. Yolanda would never let me hear the last of it, by Jove!"

He dropped a few inches suddenly as the ladder turned a little, and he directed his attention to the men in the boat.

"I'll break every bone in your two worthless carcasses if you can't hold the damned thing still!" he screamed at them.

James Wishart, standing in the shadow of a ventilator cowl, regarded this exhibit of race supremacy with a curiosity that in no way diminished his interest in the names he had just heard. Even now, after the strange outburst of ineffectual abuse, the word Yolanda seemed to remain before James, like

a resonant apparition, a shining enigma in the darkness of his mind.

When the boat was gone and the deck once more deserted, the young man paused, before he went below, to wonder who the girl called Yolanda might be. He was sensitive to the melody of names. There was Maria Chisola, the strangeness of her name catching in the gossamer threads of a romantic memory. In the days of which George Harkelaw wrote there were Wisharts overseas, in foreign wars, and through them, perhaps, James had this fancy for pretty names. And the new name seemed to him, as he turned in that night, to have some identity with his thoughts earlier in the evening, when he regretted the obscurity of the future and the wasted life of a seaman. The owner of such a name might be . . . James paused as he put out his hand to swing the tin shade between himself and the gimbal lamp by his bed-place. He frowned at the unwonted elusiveness of his thoughts. Miss Winifred Erskine had never, with all the glamour of her person and career, affected him to that extent. He plunged the little cabin in shadow and lay down with his hands on his breast, staring at the ceiling, pondering for a while this novel conundrum of a casually heard name, strange, seductive, disturbing to a young man suspicious of his fortunes.

Yolanda!

CHAPTER IV

HE WAS aroused next morning by Mr. Barker drawing back the bunk curtains with a tinkle of brass rings and grasping him by the shoulder.

"Are you wakin'?" muttered the chief engineer.

The third glanced at his silver watch on a hook and saw it was barely six o'clock.

"What's the trouble?" he asked, putting his legs over the bunk board. James Wishart was always immediately awake when called. He looked at Mr. Barker and then withdrew his eyes. That gentleman was not in the pink of condition. He was still in his shore clothes and appeared to have slept in a drain pipe. A heavy growth of sooty bristle covered his cheeks and chin, and his eyes blinked in pallid, dark-ringed hollows. His derby hat had been in crashing contact with a whitewashed wall. And as James slipped to the floor and pushed his feet into his thick felt slippers he was aware of Mr. Barker's breath. He coughed.

"Get yourself dressed and go ashore for the second. I'll look after the crowd," said Mr. Barker.

"What's the matter with the second?" asked James.

"Well, he's in a bit of a fix and we've got to get him out of it," was the reply. "Have you got any money, Mister?"

"A little, not much," James replied, pouring out a drink of cold water. The chief reached out and took the bottle, draining as though his throat were on fire.

"I'll bet it'll be a cold day when you have no money," he said shrewdly. "Well, I've got a five-pound note and you can take it. What's yours?"

"A couple of sovereigns, or something like that," said James, and he began to dress.

"We may need them. Now, I'll tell you what's to do." Mr. Barker filled his pipe and sat down on the settee. "You see, Mister, the second had a skirt here a good while back, four or five years ago. We needn't go into that. Anyhow, the kid's here now. Well, last night we were in this place and Faustine,

she has the kid and says it's hers now. Faustine runs the place. The second was drunk as a fiddler's bitch, and he catches sight of the kid, and I suppose he couldn't help seeing the likeness for himself. Little girl's about four years old and big for her age. Well, the second, he starts a riot. Looked as though he'd gone off his head temporary. Something Faustine says to him while he was in there got his back up, I fancy. Made a fine stink, I can tell you. Took six of us to bring him down. There was a little spiggotty cop in there, as they always have by law, and he starts to draw his sword and arrests the second. Faustine was so mad you'd ha' thought the kid was hers, but she's a good sport. She knows me, you understand, and in the end we fixed it they were to keep Mr. Humphries there instead of locking him up in the calabozo. I said I'd send up something so they could drink our healths. You can do it for a couple of quid. But don't pinch on it. We've got to get the second down here without giving the old man any trouble. He's got his knife into the second."

"I see," said James.

"He'd leave him in jail just to get back on me—and him. He would. I know this old man. It's better for you to do."

"I'll go," said James.

He was far from caring for this diplomatic mission. He saw the chief's anxiety, and it was an unpleasant thing to leave a shipmate in jail. And he was human enough to remember that it would be a sweet life for himself if Captain Millerton chose to sail without a substitute, as he could by British law.

"Mind you," said Mr. Barker as they sat at breakfast, "I'm not sayin' as the second had any business to get into a mess like this. I'm not sayin' that at all." The chief looked out of the corner of his eye at the shadow of Larry the mess boy coming down the stairs, and he maintained a steady silence as that young man, having deposited the dish of liver and bacon on the table, stood alertly at attention at the door, his large and sensitive ears ready to catch every word that might pass. Mr. Barker, gazing at his third engineer over the heavy mug of coffee, was aware of Larry as a transmitter of mess-room talk to the cook, and of course to that spiggotty yellow-faced thief, Alvarez the steward. The silence became heavy. Larry shifted his gaze from Mr. Barker's face to the bevelled glass deadlight in the ceiling and back to Mr. Barker's ominously

hunched back in time to see the chief regard him with a sour expression.

"Go and get me some hot water," Mr. Barker growled. "I'm going to shave."

"Yessir. Mr. Humphries want breakfast, sir?"

"Of course he does! He's seeing about the ash boat. Go on, you!"

Larry skipped up and into the galley, hot with his news.

"Now, then," said the chief. "You see how he was fishin' for information? The old man 'ud know all about it in two twos. Slip away as quiet as you can and say nothin' to nobody. Don't lose the ship for a pennorth o' tar. We'll make it good to you when we pay off."

"I understand," said James. He was finished quickly and without fuss, and when Larry clattered down the stairway again, James was waiting to go up, his hat on his head and a cigarette in his mouth.

He reflected that it was smart of Mr. Barker to allude to the ash boat. There it was coming alongside now, and the donkeyman was rigging the shoot. Mr. Harris, the second mate, was standing by, his cheap blue uniform, with its brass buttons dingy green from the sea air, looking very shabby in the brilliant sunlight, Mr. Harris, stifling a yawn, for he had arrived on board about four in the morning, caught sight of somebody leaving the ship and started toward the latter. He was much surprised to discover that the respectably dressed stranger was the third engineer. He drew near, his almost concave physiognomy, with its flattened button nose, creased in a species of amiable toleration. He was frankly interested in the third's escapade. No doubt fed up with that second and taking French leave.

"You for the beach, Mister?" he remarked in a spirit of condescending camaraderie. James nodded and, looking over the side to make sure the boat was there, mounted the steps and went over the side.

"Well, you needn't be so damned sniffy about it," snapped Mr. Harris, whose nerves had been deranged by six hours' continuous inebriation. He folded his arms on the bulwarks and thrust his face close to that of the descending James. To Mr. Harris coolness and a lack of volubility were an insult. To him, an officer! James looked up and caught the expression of venom in the young man's face.

"*I* know well enough where the second is," whispered Mr. Harris, and he gazed sneeringly over James Wishart's head at the city of Havana.

"Then there's no need for me to tell ye," said James quietly.

"Oh, you think you're too big to talk to me, eh?" went on Mr. Harris.

"I might tell ye one thing, Mr. Harris," said James, stopping in his careful negotiation of the rope ladder.

"Is that so? And what may that be?"

"Just that you've not washed your ears this morning. They're dirty."

Mr. Harris resumed abruptly his interest in the mess made by the donkeyman on the bridge deck. His hands in his pockets, he walked jauntily to and fro, an expression of extreme truculence on his face. In spite of his position as an officer, there was yet much of the impudent apprentice about Mr. Harris. He manifested that strange combination of ferocious blackguardism and pathetic puerility common to "brass bounders." It was like a blend of apache and schoolboy. His position as an officer was strangely in contrast with his natural proclivity to skylark and wallow in the mud of the by-ways. He needed very much someone to talk to. It was this, really, that had made him go up to the third engineer, and he was mad at being snubbed because he had been rude. He turned on his heel and looked over his shoulder at the boat bearing that taciturn young man ashore. Why was he going at this hour? Humph! Mr. Harris found himself suddenly halted by a problem. It was not, where was Mr. Wishart going? It was something abysmally deeper in his young life, something much more important to him personally. It was, indeed, the precise difference between himself and the young man sitting in that boat and being pulled toward the Custom House. Mr. Harris began to study the deck under his feet. What was the source of that precision and economy of speech, that impression of being entirely competent? Was it personality? Mr. Harris had heard of that. The mate of a ship had once told him that it was a good thing to have—personality. But that mate didn't explain how a chap was to get it. Was one born with it? Mr. Harris silently objected to this. We were all equal, he maintained. Some had luck. Others, no luck at all. Only one thing he knew, and that was—here he scowled at the deck—he himself hadn't got it.

James Wishart, nearing the shore, was not perplexed by these

problems. He had made a gentle and indirect criticism of the second mate's curiosity and had forgotten him at once. He was not even thinking very much about his own errand. It was his habit, and it accounted largely for the serenity of his character, to cross no bridges until he came to them. Looking around him he saw the sullen and formidable Cabanas Castle, and the *Candleshoe,* diminished very much indeed by distance, and very shabby in the brilliant morning sunlight. The domes and towers of San Cristobal de la Havana were around him, and in the distance the rolling hills of Camaguey. To James, thus far, foreign parts were foreign parts. He had no nostalgia for any special shore. That was to come to him later. Just now, paying off the boatmen and taking his way out into the noisy dirty street of wine shops and cigar stores, he was aware of a faint curiosity, but nothing more. He hailed a carriage and offered the driver a piece of paper on which was pencilled the address where, according to the chief, Mr. Humphries was emerging from a troubled night. The driver, an exceedingly dirty brigand with a glint of humour in his black eyes, raised his shoulders and drew down the corners of his mouth. James came to the conclusion that the man couldn't read. He could smoke, however, and clutched greedily at the Virginian cigarettes offered to him.

"Animas," suggested James, and the man flourished his whip. James got in, and the horses began to gallop, the driver cracking and lashing his whip in a theatrical manner. James felt self-conscious. He sat upright with folded arms and wondered why these chaps revealed such an astonishing proclivity for making fools of themselves. Not that he blamed them, since they were not British and so had excuses. Tie their hands and they could not talk, as we say. Yet far better to be like them, emotional and gesticulating creatures, than those apathetic coolies of his late experience, with their hair done up like a woman's, in a bun, or the enigmatic yellow men, who were so numerous and so much alike, they impressed him more as maggots than humans. James Wishart's mind never escaped from the normal prejudices of his race and class save when he though of Maria Chisola and the emotions of which she had been the embodiment. The fact that he did not voice those prejudices in no way modified his firm stand. He did not think that his own people were superior to the other peoples of the world. He knew it. He knew it so completely it never occurred

to him there was anything to argue about. Those others dwelt beyond the pale, eager to come in, emulous of our character, our clothes, our superb poise. They could never achieve it, but let them struggle, just the same.

The carriage rushed up the narrow street from the Governor's palace and came out upon the great square. James was impressed with the blend of tropical vegetation and the crush of carriages. Well, no one could deny they had a wonderful country. He caught a glimpse of the magnificent Prado before the carriage dived into a street by the Opera House. He looked around, and the carriage turned again.

It was a long street of high, inscrutable houses, with a profusion of stucco ornament and bulging embrasures to the windows. They were, to the casual glance, as magnificent as those in the Prado, but when the carriage stopped suddenly in front of one of them, James perceived the general dinginess of the place, and the squalor that contrasted with its original grandeur. The driver turned round on his seat and regarded his fare with a humorous glance. He was used to coming down here, but as a rule his patrons chose the evening. He made a gesture toward the house. "Here, Senor," he seemed to say, "is the place you required. God go with you." His dissolute eye was quick to see the gesture James made, that he was to wait. "*Bueno, Senor.* And—another cigarette?" James gave him six and left him in a blissful dream.

The shabby door, whose rich grainings and chamfered panels were dulled and chipped and darkened with grease from human hands, was held by a bright new American lock. He pressed the bell and heard it buzz in the patio. He was aware, although she vanished as he turned his head, of a woman at one of the windows. He heard voices and the slip-slop of someone walking in loose slippers. There was a grating about six inches square in the door, and the shutter behind it suddenly opened. James saw a pair of sharp black eyes beneath two black semicircular brows in a chalk-white face. For a moment that apparition hovered there examining him, and he regarded it steadily, feeling that he could explain better inside.

Apparently the owner of those suspicious and inhospitable eyes divined what this respectable, sober young man wanted at such an hour. The lock clicked, and he was admitted into a darkened patio, where tall palms and feathery things in pots stood about amid the chairs and tables. In the distance he could

see a negress with a broom, and a cat lay flat on the flagstones by the fountain in the centre.

He turned to look at the person who had admitted him. She was about forty, and she was in that condition when a woman derives least advantage from the cosmetics demanded by the activities of the evening. Her face was a grotesque mask of plaster white, her lips showed a vivid edging of rouge beyond the pallid pulpiness of natural skin, as though the tides of evil had withdrawn and left their mark. "What you want?" she demanded, drawing a robe of dirty white velvet about her fleshy bosom.

James told her. He had come for a friend of his who had had a little trouble last night. She clicked her tongue against her teeth, shrugged her shoulders, and made a Latin gesture of comprehension. She went into the darkness of the patio, indicating that he was to follow. He did so, and as he went along he became aware of eyes watching him from doorways. Once he passed a cot where a girl of about sixteen lay asleep in almost complete nudity, and with an expression of extraordinary innocence on her face as she opened her eyes to gaze upon the intruder.

James found himself in a room that to him was as unfamiliar as some fantastic spectacle of the theatre. It was very large and contained an enormous bed with a cover of orange satin trimmed with lace. A chandelier glittered above it, and a lamp on an elaborate dressing table shed a glare upon a little girl lying on a pink *chaise longue*. James was very much perturbed. He stood in confusion, holding his hat in his hand. He had expected to find Mr. Humphries here. For a flitting instant of time he had a strange feeling of terror as he gazed at the brat on the sofa. The child's pale, thin little face recalled Mr. Barker's uneasy allusion to the past. People only had to look and see for themselves he had remarked. It was a powerful but evanescent illusion that Mr. Humphries *was* there. . . .

The woman was speaking as she poured out a glass of Ron Bacardi and handed it to him. He took it, but did not drink.

"Your friend he make trouble," she said, lighting a cigarette and seating herself. "They take him away."

"Where?" James asked her.

"Calabozo," she replied, watching him. "The police, they take him. You want to get him out?"

He nodded, wondering what in the world he was to do now. She rose, motioning him to stay where he was.

"You wait. Me, I telephone my friend in the police," she said, and went out.

He set down the glass and looked about him. A French poodle walked in and stood for a moment looking at him, astonishing him with the vile perfection of its unnatural barbering and the sophistication of its penetrating black eyes. That dog, James felt, seemed to know all the revolting secret history of the house. It seemed to know about Mr. Humphries and the reason for his own visit to this place. James was distressed. The child's presence there bothered him. He turned away and looked at the photographs of dark men, in uniforms of gold lace, or with extremely high collars and marvellous moustaches. These photographs were stuck or balanced on the dressing table. Some had brown burns on them where they had fallen forward on cigarettes. There were photographs of girls too, dressed in feather boas, with white-topped button boots and toques with upstanding feathers, or in gigantic picture hats with nothing save rows of teeth to indicate the features below.

He waited. The child, as though to impress the stranger, slipped to the floor and played in a self-conscious manner with the dog. The heat, the odour of musk, the unfamiliar furnishings, like the seraglio of some degenerate Iberian potentate, oppressed the young man. He found himself calling up the scene of the night before—Mr. Humphries swaying unsuspectingly into one of those sumptuous chambers and beholding in that child, through the drunken mists, the undying past. Well! James was unable to formulate a solution for such a problem. He put his finger to his forehead in a way he had and meditated.

The woman came in and saw him studying the child. She lighted a fresh cigarette and spoke to the child, who got up and, favouring James with a bold look out of her black eyes, went out with the dog.

"How you like my little girl!" she asked suddenly. James made a conciliatory gesture, and she shrugged her shoulders out of the white velvet wrap.

"I understand. Ze chief, he tell you. Well, nobody don't get her. I fix it! Her mother friend of mine, see? You get your frien' and you take him 'ome. Unnerstand?"

"I don't know this Spanish," muttered James.

"That's all right. I speak the coachman. You no drink,

eh?" she said, noting the drink. She went up to him and pinched his cheek, looking earnestly into his face.

"I 'ave a good 'ouse," she said. James made no reply. He rose. He laid some money on the table behind him and took his hat.

"A very good 'ouse," she reiterated harshly and then she smiled at his embarrassment.

"I unnerstand," she said and took up the money. They went to the door and she gave James a card. It bore the words "El Paradiso" and the address.

"Take the Senor to the Alcaldia in the Plaza San Pedro," she called to the driver. He flourished his whip. She waved a good-bye as James got in.

As they drove across the great square again he examined the card and then flipped it into the street. James was able to avoid such enterprises without assuming an air of righteousness. There lay within his vigorous and well-balanced character an element of boyish chastity. It was a perception of this rare and seductive quality that made the woman pinch his cheek, as though she were incredulous of it and wished to reassure herself of his existence. The carriage, turning into a shady square, with long diagonal paths among the trees and a statue of a hero on horseback, with arm flung out, as though he were haranguing his army, stopped in front of a yellow building with black sentry boxes on either side of a dark portal and some little dark men in blue uniform lounging on a bench. This, he gathered from the driver, who now regarded him with a devouring curiosity blended with respect, was the Alcaldia. He descended and entered the place as cautiously as though it were an unknown cavern. As his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness he saw a passage at the rear and at the end of it a strong grating, like the front of a den. He turned to a staircase, and seeing one of the policemen pointing and nodding sourly, he went up until he reached the offices on the first floor.

A number of officials sat at desks in this large chamber, leaning back in their chairs, bending over documents, reaching for telephones and conversing with attentive subordinates. And they were doing all these things with a slight air of theatrical self-consciousness, as though it were a game and they had just learned it. When James reached the hardwood barrier and waited to be addressed, these gentlemen glanced in his direction and became ostentatiously absorbed in their affairs. But per-

haps because they waved fans to cool themselves James was unable to take them seriously. They appeared to him—and he retained this impression of the executive Latin American all his life, to be engaged in an operatic performance graciously patronized by an invisible but powerful Anglo-Saxon authority. Even when they ignored or flaunted him, he was convinced it was because they felt securely the support of men of his own race.

James caught the large brown eyes of a young man fluttering up and down between his work and the stranger, and he held up his hand. Slowly the youth rose, advancing to the barrier, as though James were a dangerous animal, and halting at a safe distance.

"Captain Gomez," said James. "Is he here?"

The youth suddenly became active, intelligent, considerate, helpful. He opened a gate in the barrier and directed James to an office far down the room. At the door of this cubicle he paused, and it was pushed open by a huge hairy person in his shirt sleeves waving a palmetto fan. His large moustache and a certain steadiness in his eye reminded James Wishart of the chief engineer. Captain Gomez was a Spanish version of Mr. Barker. A little hotter and fatter and blacker. James went in, and as the big man released the door it swung to.

Captain Gomez had another point of resemblance to Mr. Barker. He spoke English—a little more fluently if anything. His shrewd black eyes summed up James Wishart. He himself had been a sailor, a fireman, a soldier in the war of Cuban emancipation, an official in the Junta de Sanidad. Probably he was a little cleverer than Mr. Barker, as well.

"Well," he said, without smiling yet without irritation. "What's de trouble, Mister?"

James put his hat on edge by his chair, sat down, and while wiping his face gave Captain Gomez the main features of the difficulty.

"And she telephoned here, so I understand, and told me to ask for . . ." James changed the last word to a significant glance and a movement of the hand.

Captain Gomez treated himself to a moment's examination of James and swung round upon his telephone. James held out his cigarettes. The captain's big fleshy hand engulfed them while he spoke into the receiver. His eyes never left his visitor's face, and James had an impression that he was being described

to the person at the other end. Captain Gomez began to smile abstractedly as he listened to the answer. He said *"Si"* several times, still smiling, and rang off with unnecessary energy.

"So," he said to James, resting his great elbows on the arms of his chair and clasping his hands loosely one over the other. "That's all right, Mister." He looked at James steadily. The young man leaned forward and, stretching out his left hand, palm downward, left a folded bill on the desk among the papers. Captain Gomez got up and opened the door.

"You wait downstairs," he suggested in a low growl.

James stood in the lofty whitewashed tunnel downstairs looking thoughtfully toward the grating at the far end, and wondered where exactly Mr. Humphries might be.

Mr. Humphries suddenly obliged his rescuer. What James Wishart had imagined were bundles and sacks behind that grating were men. One of the bundles rolled over in the right-hand corner and was transformed into the second engineer of the *Candleshoe* sitting on a box. He peered through the bars and let out a harsh hail.

"Hey, Mister. Where'n hell you been? Come up here. I want to speak to you."

James Wishart was very much upset. Only at this moment did the crude fact penetrate his mind that his shipmate was a prisoner. The shock of this sudden view of Mr. Humphries actually looking out from behind bars, very much like a black-eyed ferocious animal endowed with speech, prevented the young man from noting the peremptory and unreasonable quality of the speech itself. As he drew near he could make out the shapes of other men in that dark place. They lay like animals, and he had a notion they remained at a distance from Mr. Humphries because that gentleman had been fighting them for a place where there was a breath of air and had knocked them all senseless. Just at that moment the second enginer, a growth of harsh bristle on his long aggressive jaw, dark rings beneath his black eyes and his lower lip swollen to a purple pulpy mass, seemed capable of extraordinary deeds of violence. There was nothing in his demeanour to indicate that he felt his position to be in any way unusual. As he stared out at James Wishart, his expression was one of hard, preoccupied sophistication. In one of his calloused, unwashed hands he held a copy of the morning paper folded into a club. James felt this lack of humiliation

in Mr. Humphries like a personal affront, but he waited before speaking, wiping his face with a handkerchief.

Mr. Humphries examined him sharply, beating a tattoo on the bars against which he leaned.

"What made you so long?" he broke out at length. His voice was a startling contrast, in its carefully modulated quietness, to the primitive yell of the moment before. Without waiting for an answer, as though the question had been but the sensuous gratification of a querulous character, he went on, "Seen the captain? Didn't Faustine send you here to see the captain?"

"He'll be down," muttered James, looking over his shoulder, not that he expected to see anyone, but because the sight of Mr. Humphries was distasteful to his native fastidiousness of soul. "I put something in his way."

"He'd better be down," assented Mr. Humphries, rubbing his bristly face vigorously. James turned his head and stared in quiet astonishment at his shipmate, not quite sure he heard aright. It was incredible to him that a man in such a dire condition should assume a bellicose attitude toward the massive Captain Gomez.

"Put something in his way!" repeated Mr. Humphries. "Did you put anything in Faustine's way?" James nodded. "Oh, ye did, did ye? Well, where's that policeman? Oh, there he is!"

The second engineer, who had been alternately regarding James and staring between the young man's legs, now raised himself from the dirty wooden box on which he had been reclining and stood up stiffly. From a doorway in the tunnel a person in uniform, carrying a large bunch of heavy keys, came toward them. Captain Gomez filled the doorway immediately after, but remained in semi-obscurity, stroking the full curves of his moustache.

"Hah!" said Mr. Humphries, watching the key turning slowly in the ponderous padlock, and slapping his thigh with the newspaper. "Hah! We'll see who's clever on the *Candleshoe* now!" He turned to the other prisoners, who were leaning forward perhaps with some faint sentiment of wistful pleasure at the liberating of so forceful a personality. "Back, you swine! It's me who's goin' out, not you." He made a lunge at them with his newspaper, and they watched him in a sort of sympathetic admiration. The wicket swung ajar, Mr. Humphries stepped

out briskly, and the padlock was immediately snapped on again.

"Once aboard the lugger," he remarked to nobody in particular, when he caught sight of Captain Gomez. "Hullo!" He saluted with the newspaper. "Here's to you, Captain. I'll tell Faustine you're one of the best."

"If you're sober," said Captain Gomez, turning to go. "You better go back to the ship. I know all about you."

"Oh, I'll go back to the ship—don't you worry," muttered Mr. Humphries. He turned to James Wishart, stared hard at him for a moment, smiled with a sort of bitter brilliance, took the young man's arm, and started through the dark entry toward the hot brightness of the square. "Where's our coachman, Mister? You heard what he said?—go back to the ship!" He laughed and glanced at the policeman lounging at the gate as though he were acquainted with their private lives and was filled with contempt and pity for such people. James, however, felt Mr. Humphries' hand tremble as it clutched him by the arm and saw him trip when he put his foot on the carriage step. He sank back as though his nerve, having carried him through a crisis, had suddenly given way. James got in beside him and made a signal to the driver to start.

They were in the narrow and crowded Obispo before Mr. Humphries roused himself and sat up.

"Where we goin'?" he demanded, looking round. "Ship? Damn the ship." He unrolled the newspaper and held it up to the driver, thumping him on the back. The carriage stopped while the man once again grimaced and hoisted his lean shoulders.

"He can't read," said James. "I tried him before."

"Say, Johnny," Mr. Humphries went on, slapping the paper. "Loteria, you sabe?" From an inner pocket of his vest he drew out a crumpled lottery ticket. "Hah!" he croaked, as the driver's saturnine features became convulsed with intelligence, "He's got it. *Vamos,* Johnny. Plenty dollars for you now!" He sank back again.

James Wishart glanced at the newspaper lying across the second's knee. He saw the rows and rows of winning numbers, some printed in fat black lettering indicating the big prizes, but he made no comment. He saw something had happened to Mr. Humphries completely overshadowing both the *Candleshoe* and the misfortunes of the night. Well, to James it meant that he himself would suffer no money loss by squaring Faustine

and Captain Gomez. To his sedate sense of rectitude there was no particular glamour about gambling. It seemed to him, moreover, that he was suffering far more than Mr. Humphries from the shameful experience of having been jailed. This idea was so grotesque when he turned it over in his mind that he remained silent.

To Mr. Humphries nothing was ever grotesque. He had one of those hard, efficient minds in the dull surface of which nothing can be reflected. To him the fortune of the *Loteria* was as beneficent, as just, and as desirable as a legacy from a pious relative. More so. No strings to it. He did not accept the hazards and difficulties of his life with fatalism so much as with an active, querulous sense of superiority. He had a feeling for irony without humour. He was quite unable to consider the money he earned as a reward for the work he did. He worked, in a certain sense, not for money but to gratify an obscure ideal, a desire to prove his worth to himself, and perhaps to Mr. Barker. He knew the chief had no inconvenient illusions about his getting into jail. When he heard the news, Mr. Barker would think of last night as having never existed. Both of these men regarded the world of work and wages in which they lived with an active hatred, an uncompromising disgust, which no reformer could surpass. Their ideal was a dissolute efficiency inspired by contempt for themselves for being unable to escape the thrall of industrial serfdom. At the moment when they pulled up in front of the Loteria where a milling crowd of people clustered about the placards of winning numbers, there was much more affinity between Mr. Humphries and the driver than might be imagined. More than existed between him and James Wishart.

He was out before the carriage stopped. James watched him boring his way through the crowd, and then looked up at the face of the driver, distorted into a hideous mask of delighted cupidity, down which thin lines of sweat ran to his neck and chin. To the young man there was something ignoble, not so much in the craving of all these people for money as in the lack of a decent reserve to conceal the nakedness of their desires. His eyes followed the lines of the ponderous arcades and mouldings, the lift of the huge dirty yellow walls to the unsullied blue of the blazing sky, and then dropped to the crowd of men and women, who resembled a swarm of insects struggling for some invisible fragment of garbage. He was profoundly disturbed

by the events of the morning. For a long time he had been withdrawn into himself, nursing the illusion that his own bitter experience of life had been unusual, that men and women were almost universally inspired by the decency his own soul found so congenial. He did not know, at this moment, what to think about it. He felt a great longing for the *Candleshoe;* not so much for the men on board as for the ship herself, for her homely virtues of security and routine, of her austere life, set apart from the obscenity of this predatory mob of landlubbers. He thought of her with affection, as a refuge, as the monk thinks of his monastery with its stark cleanliness and rigorous discipline. He detected in all these people he had met, in Faustine, in Captain Gomez, in the populace in front of the Loteria, and in Mr. Humphries too, a disintegration of character. There was nothing in their behaviour to show that they would permit any consideration in the world to step in between them and their intense desire for money. Aged women, bent double and tottering into the grave, clutched bunches of tickets and held them, with feeble supplicatory motions of their scrawny hands, toward James in the carriage. Small boys tore here and there at play, yet with occasional lapses into commercialism when they remembered the bundles of tickets in their grimy fists, and stood expectantly on the carriage step. Their faces seemed coated with brown shellac, and their insolent gaze flickered over him as he sat quietly passing his handkerchief between his neck and his collar. And then he saw a shifting ripple at the doorway. Mr. Humphries was boring his way out. The driver beat his hand rhythmically on the rail of his seat and swayed with exquisite emotion as his patron once again entered the carriage and sank back as before. Mr. Humphries took no notice of anybody or anything as the man whipped up his horse. He seemed to be saving himself, like a boxer in his corner, for the next round. His right wrist was pressed to his coat over his pocket. He might have been posing for a patriot on the way to the scaffold, so lofty was his expression for a moment.

"Are ye goin' to the ship now?" asked James. Mr. Humphries sat up and looked about him. They were in the narrow Calle leading to the water.

"Ship? What's the ship done for me that I should worry about the ship? Now, I'll tell ye, Mister. The trouble with you is you're too conscientious. Let the ship alone. What the

eye don't see the heart don't grieve for. Ain't there more ships than parish churches? Well, then, don't worry. She won't sink. Look, look at this!"

He lowered his voice as he put his left hand stealthily into his bosom and drew out five one-hundred-dollar bills folded in four. He held them in the palm of his hand so that James could see the five sets of numerals, and leered at him with an extraordinary blend of patronage and vindictiveness.

James looked and then transferred his attention to Mr. Humphries himself.

"Well, Mister, you're all right now, so I'll be getting back."

"You'll be what?" Mr. Humphries was incredulous. He was separating three of the bills from the other two. These latter he replaced in his breast pocket. "Don't talk such nonsense. Look you here. I want you to keep these for me, see?" He poked the three bills into the astonished young man's hand. "Put 'em in your pocket. These 'll do me for a few hours." He breathed through his nose and smiled. He thumped the driver on the back and made a circular gesture signifying he was to drive up town again. The driver would have set out for the other end of Cuba if Mr. Humphries had suggested the expedition.

"Banco," said the second engineer. "Savvy? Banco, old son. Got to change one of these," he muttered to himself.

James Wishart made no audible protest against these new arrangements. That was not his way. At any time he could spring from the carriage and hail another. He looked at his watch. It was only ten o'clock now. This surprised him, because he seemed to have lived a long time since he left the *Candleshoe*. The sun was getting hotter. He put the money into a safe pocket and lighted a fresh cigarette. He was unable to follow Mr. Humphries in his thoughts because he lacked that gentleman's experience of prolonged sprees ashore.

"Why," Mr. Humphries ejaculated suddenly, "you don't know you're alive, man."

Even this had no visible effect upon James. It might have been true, so silent did he remain until they reached the grand square and turned up a side street. The second smiled at the driver's shrewd estimate of what was wanted. They drew up at a sort of general store and delicatessen. There was a barber's shop next door. Mr. Humphries slapped his thigh.

"This is it," he said contentedly. "This is where we begin.

I had supper here last night. Old Luiz is just the boy to get me a wash-and-brush-up. And change me the money too. Now look ye here, Mister Wishart, don't you run away with the idea I'm askin' you to come with me. Not at all. Ho-ho, not at all! Your job is to go back to the ship, if you want to, though I'd have a walk up the street if I was you; but at all costs look after my money! If I take it I'll get stewed and lose it. I'm goin' to get stewed, but when I get back to the *Candleshoe* I'll want to go ashore and get stewed again to-morrow. Understand? Well, now, we'll pay off this grimy monkey on the box. Give him half a sovereign, Mister. And pay yourself out of what you have there. I'll need all this. Ah, pay the chief too. Tell him I'll be aboard by and bye. Now, I'm away."

Before James could make any comment upon this remarkable, comprehensive speech, Mr. Humphries sprang to the sidewalk and vanished into the odorous darkness of the delicatessen store. The driver, who had been twisted round on his seat glaring with almost insupportable pangs of desire at the money, now slipped to the ground and extended his crooked hand to James, his yellow fangs gleaming beneath the ragged black moustache in a smile like an incredible caricature.

"Here," said James shortly, handing him a gold coin, and got out himself. He started off for the square, eager to emerge from the atmosphere of unscrupulous rapacity in which he had been moving since he came ashore. It was strange that Faustine, the woman who kept the Casa Paradiso, inspired him with more esteem than any of the others. He had no desire ever to see her again. Her very existence seemed an affront to women like Winifred Erskine. But he remembered that Faustine had impressed him with a kind of battered, tarnished honesty of soul, as though she had encountered circumstances too strong for her and had been trodden into the mire; whereas Mr. Humphries appeared to have leapt into it with deliberate malevolence, as though it were his native element.

Now, for a little while, he was clear of them. He came out into the great square, admiring the graceful palms of the gardens and the rich elaboration of the buildings. He passed cafés whose chairs and tables overflowed upon the sidewalk, and whose lofty spaces were full of light and the cheerful sounds of a civilized conviviality. James would have sat down and had a glass of beer, but his bashfulness in a strange land held him on his way. He came round to the south side of the square and discov-

ered a hotel whose name he recognized. James knew nothing of Spanish, but the word Inglaterra he suspected meant England. He paused under the arcade of the hotel entrance, and, seeing a number of people at the tables of the public room, went in and sat down.

And when he had disposed of his hat and looked around him, he liked it. He liked the vista of cool tiling, the arabesque screens of light wood, the quiet gaiety of the groups eating ices and drinking, through straws, the coloured liquids from tall, frosty glasses. He liked the leisurely motion of the big ceiling fans depending from gilt rods, and the swarthy, white-clad waiters hurrying swiftly with trays of siphons, bowls of ice, and limes.

By the windows, reading a newspaper, over which her head was bent with studious absorption, was a girl in a frock of flowered French georgette, sleeveless and transparent. James allowed his eyes to rest upon her for a moment as they moved around the room. He saw a head with the dark yellow hair in intricate gleaming coils, white neck and shoulders revealing a polished convexity above the straight hollowed back, and vigorous, slender arms sprawled to keep the newspaper from moving in the breeze of the fans. He caught a glimpse of her legs in stockings of white *mousseline* propped on a chair. Her small buckskin shoes were so sharp in the toe, so high and slender in the heel, they resembled barbed hooks. Perhaps he would have given her no further thought just then had not an approaching waiter set down a tray. She raised her head at the sound and shot a level glance toward the young man looking at her, a glance that was abstracted and then for a moment concentrated and appraising. Then she frowned as though in disapproval of her own interest and returned to the paper. There was an expression of voluptuous insolence in her large, light brown eyes beneath the thin arched brows, and in the droop of her red mouth. James was conscious of a sudden change of mood as he glanced again at the head bent over the tile-topped table. He was surprised to discover that his interest in the pose of the girl, in the character implicit in the strong yet delicate sun-tanned fingers, was stronger than he would have believed possible under such circumstances. There were days later on, days of anguish and of ecstasy, when he tried to remember whether there had been any warning. He decided there had been nothing out of the way. Yet at times, when he thought of the coiled

yellow bronze of her head in the Hotel Inglaterra, the sordid business of the morning seemed some sort of sombre interlude between the *Candleshoe* and the great adventure of his life.

The waiter was bringing his bottle of beer when James received another surprising impression. He saw the stranger of the evening before, the visitor to the *Candleshoe,* advancing among the tables. No one could help seeing Don Orlando Perkins when he appeared. He was wearing a suit of white flannel and a hat of soft white felt. His yellow cane with the golden hook had been changed for one of ebony and silver, and his gloves were now of chamois skin, soft and loose. But his air of aristocratic and mature handsomeness was unchanged. He had appeared to own the *Candleshoe,* and he seemed equally the ideal proprietor of the Inglaterra as he came past on his way to the girl by the window. And as James was formulating in his mind the reflection that here was the queer fellow again, Mr. Perkins shot a keen look of recognition at him and paused for an instant.

"Ah!" he remarked. "Saw you on the boat, eh? Having a look round? That's right."

James, addressed so unexpectedly, rose in some confusion and replied by nods and shakes of the head. As he sat down he saw the girl's eyes upon him again, and they seemed to him extraordinarily large and full of an unawakened courage. As Mr. Perkins laid his cane on the table and seated himself on the chair from which the girl removed her feet, he clapped his hands for the waiter and remarked affably, with a movement of the head:

"One of the chaps from our boat."

Again the girl's expression changed. She gave Mr. Perkins a brief glance and looked again at the young man. Her gaze seemed to dilate and diminish. She might have been invested with a colossal power over the lives of men and have regarded them as the slaves of her imperial desires. She leaned her head on her hand, and with the corners of her mouth slightly drooping she returned to the paper, as though weary of the cares of an emotional absolutism.

To James, the words addressed to her, heard clearly enough, awoke in his mind a memory of the scene last night on the *Candleshoe.* The sound of Mr. Perkins' voice recalled the almost physical delight he had experienced at the name pronounced in the darkness by the bulwarks. He had fallen asleep entranced by the mysterious melody of that name coming to him after

Mr. Punshon's serenade. He had wondered what she was like, the Yolanda who would not tolerate the contrivance of a rope ladder to reach the deck. Here, in the omnipotent security of wealth and loveliness, she suddenly embodied all the illusion of his life, the exquisite and inaccessible delights that his simple heart had ever divined beyond the barriers of his humble existence. The recognition of this feeling was so complete that he sat with downcast eyes, in a delicious confusion, and with a faint alarm lest she should have detected and comprehended the tumult of his mind. And as the significance of the phrase used by Mr. Perkins became clear to him he was plunged yet further into an agitated and seductive perplexity. If the *Candleshoe* was "their boat," it was plain that these two beings of another sphere were coming aboard. The future became an enigma of darkness illumined by flashes of lightning from unseen summits, and James maintained a demeanour of motionless gravity as he tried to grasp the result of this new departure from the life of the ship.

Mr. Perkins, however, made no further allusion to his plans as he sat with the girl by the window. Those plans were not those of a wealthy tourist, unless one can imagine a wealthy tourist chartering a cargo boat for a cruise. Even Batinas Brothers, whose office he had just left on the Prado, had no information save that the *Candleshoe* was to go on time charter for Striker-Perkins & Co. James sat listening to the indolent chatter of two people who, he imagined, lived in a world of which he had no experience. He heard their voices but their words were lost. All he remembered later was the voice of the girl Yolanda. It was a voice of extraordinary plangency, with now and then the flat tones of northern speech which were like pieces of smooth jade. They lay in short sequences of opaque colour against the richly curving consonants and deep vowels of the Spanish phrases.

They spoke of the news in the papers. He saw her look up and down the columns and begin reading aloud.

"What!" said her companion in his peremptory voice. "Shot himself under her window. I suppose," he added, "you admire that sort of thing."

James saw the girl, her head on her hand, look up enigmatically at her companion.

"Yes," she said, "even though you sneer at it, you will admit his courage."

"Not at all," returned Mr. Perkins, smiling. James, who could not get the sense of their conversation, admired the smile. He liked the man's face, with the close blond beard, the straight nose, and hard blue eyes. "Not at all. People like that are no use in the world and are better out of it. Which is why they go, I suppose. Of course, you have dreamed of some such climax to that business in San Benito. Vanity, my dear child, vanity! You'll never see him again."

"Is nobody of any use in the world unless they are in business?" she asked scornfully.

"Precious little," he assured her without ill-humour. He looked round at the people in the hotel. He was at home in the world. He was, no doubt, a materialist. "Precious little. Now, Carlos would do very well in New York. It would cure him of his mania for politics. I would even assist him to a post in New York. Not Washington—New York. Importing, for instance. As it is . . ." he shrugged.

"You think all the able young men of Costaragua should leave it," she remarked bitterly.

"All the able young *politicos*," he returned, changing his legs and glancing at her for a moment. "They should lie abroad for the good of their country. Carlos never did a real day's work in his life."

"He is a gentleman," she said in a low tone, "a *caballero*."

"Well, we have too many gentlemen, my dear. We need fewer gentlemen and more working men. Fewer Bolívars and more San Martíns, as they say. Gentlemen like that young Carlos turn into troublesome political storm centres. They have the gift of the gab, as we say. Certainly your Carlos has. He has a fatal talent of fluency. His idea of a delightful evening is to compose pronunciamentos. He thinks he is a reincarnation of Bolívar. Do you know what will happen to Carlos? He will get into serious trouble one of these days, and will be shot. His father, you know, never settled down. And all Don Francisco's protection will be useless if Carlos continues to go round spouting. If he'd had any real feeling for us he would have left all that long ago. Fortunately the police found all those revolutionary books and papers in his house."

"I am not so certain, now, that it was entirely accidental," said the girl in a low tone.

"What?" said Mr. Perkins, looking at her quickly. "Oh!

We won't go into that now. He escaped. I suppose you think I arranged that too."

"It would be quite possible," she answered.

Once again James saw the gentleman give the girl a critical glance.

"You are in one of your moods," he said lightly.

"Why do you say that?" she flashed suddenly. James saw the look of intolerable anger on her face.

"Because," replied Don Orlando Perkins, "you don't even care about your Carlos. You are only trying to work up a feeling of the lonely lady locked up in a castle by the wicked giant. You're really very romantic, you know, my child." He looked at his watch. "I have to write some letters for the American mail. Lunch in half an hour. I'll look for you."

James saw him get up and pass along into the hotel. It was strange, the young man thought, that the girl should have become so angry in a few minutes. He wondered what that tall handsome person had said to her. But it was not in the nature of James Wishart to forget his duty for long. He really should get back on board the ship. He finished his beer and was preparing to take his leave when he found the girl looking at him with a smile of provocative interest. It almost seemed to him that she was reaching out and taking hold of the heart in his breast, so violently did that organ respond.

He returned the glance in surprised, candid uncertainty. She swept the room with a cool, swift scrutiny that he learned to comprehend and with her finger to her lips made a slight gesture of invitation to approach.

CHAPTER V

FOR a moment James sat with his body pressed to the table in the act of rising, his mind still busy with the decision he had reached, to return to the ship. But he could neither misunderstand the signal she had made nor disobey it. He pushed his chair back and walked slowly to the window.

"You have the advantage of me," he said with a mild and courteous gesture, that added a subtle emphasis to the reproof in the words. She turned her face up to look at him, and he found himself very close indeed to it, aware of its clear delicate pallor and the eyes, now black, now seen through swimming veils of gray and brown, now dilating beneath the firmly arched brows and reflecting the light of the square like forest pools at noonday, opaque and sinister. He looked with a curious, awe-stricken delight upon her mouth, the lips so sharply defined in vivid red, and on her bosom with the wide-set pointed breasts beneath the transparent material of her dress. The heavy, deep yellow coils of her hair inspired him with the extravagantly poetical conception of a golden helmet. It seemed to harmonize with the faint air of military glory about her personality, and the latent courage he divined in her expression. She looked up at him for a moment, her lips parted in a smile.

"Not if you sit down," she said, indicating the chair where Mr. Perkins had been sitting.

James Wishart sat down. He kept his eyes upon the table, where her hand lay on the newspaper, the slender brown fingers tapping the sheet. He was very much at a loss. Nothing he had ever experienced was of any use to him in this encounter. Yolanda de Mara recognized this. She was one of those girls who are known to all men, tender yet terrible, but for whom no one has yet fashioned an adequate name. She sat there looking at James, reading him as an expert musician glances through an unfamiliar but perfectly easy composition before beginning to play. She leaned toward him, her elbows on the table.

"You belong to our boat?" she went on, and he nodded.

"The captain, is he nice?"

James stared at her in frank wonder. He never imagined any classification of shipmasters as nice or otherwise.

"I couldna say," he remarked, still very much at a loss. "I've only just joined the ship, and I don't see so much o' the captain, you know. I'm an engineer. And that reminds me, I'll be stepping along. The chief will be needing me, I'm thinking."

"Is it a big ship? Tell me about it," she insisted.

"No, she's only a tramp steamer," returned James gravely. "Very small accommodations for passengers."

"Then you don't have any ladies on board?"

"Where would we put ladies?" he asked. "Do I understand you to say you are coming as a passenger on the *Candleshoe?*"

"How do you say that—*Candleshoe?* Yes, Don Orlando and I are going to Puerto Balboa."

"I see. I suppose your family's there, in yon place?" James inquired. The girl shook her head and looked at him pensively.

"Ah, no. I have no family. No father, no mother, nobody at all. Don Orlando—Mr. Perkins is my guardian. His father was my guardian until he died. We live in San Benito or San Paulo and in the country. You have never been to Costaragua?"

"No," said James. "It's a very fine country, they tell me."

"Wonderful!" said Yolanda, watching him with an abstracted expression in her eyes.

"Mountains and forests, the mate was saying," he went on. "Very tropical."

"Oh, yes. And volcanoes and snowstorms and earthquakes. I hate it!" She looked dreamily across the square.

"What would you be wanting, then?" James remarked. She turned to him as though unaware of what he had said, but it seemed to him that in some obscure way she had answered. She had afforded him suddenly a supreme example of her own special gift, the art of conveying a multitude of vague yet intense emotions in a single baffling and intoxicating glance. She had revealed one of the fundamental qualities of her character. He was aware of it as a magical elimination of the barriers between them. He grew bold and returned the look cautiously and modestly, and she drew a deep breath, her red lips pursed in a provocative smile.

"That would take a long while to tell," she said, "even if you were interested. Are you interested?"

He regarded her with an attentive scrutiny for an instant before replying.

"It would be natural," he muttered, and dropped his eyes to the table.

It seemed as though she remained silent in sheer amazement at his ineradicable propensity for understatement. As though it gave her offence. It was almost in bewilderment that she saw how utterly strange his character must be in comparison with the young men of San Benito, or with Don Orlando Perkins, Jr. And for her the strange was irresistibly attractive.

"Who are you?" she said suddenly, leaning toward him, and he was amazed at the sensuous, waxlike smoothness of her skin, the violet lids of her eyes with their extraordinarily long lashes, the disturbing artifice of the carmined mouth. He had never encountered anything like her. The women he had known, even Maria Chisola, had been but colourless transparencies compared with this girl with the sophistication of capital cities and the warmth of a tropical enchantress.

When he told her his name she sat back in her chair again and looked at him from under her bent brows, repeating the words with musical deliberation.

"I like it," she announced musingly. And added, "I like you too. Do you like me, Mister Wishart?"

"It will not be difficult," he remarked, and turned away to hide the blood he felt surging to his cheeks. "I must go back to the ship. There's work to do, you'll understand," he added. "Not that I'm wishing to leave you . . ."

"But you will come on shore again?" she said.

"I was not thinking of doing that. I may not have the chance."

"But think of me." She touched his hand for a single dizzying second, and her brown eyes were clouded with a magical gray-blue mist. "I am ready to die for someone to talk to."

"But you said . . ." he jerked his hand over his shoulder. "You said he was your guardian, I understood."

She shrugged her shoulders, drew down the corners of her mouth, and gave him a frank, challenging look that demolished yet one more barrier between them and offered him profound confidences.

"You don't quite understand," she replied.

"You'll be explaining it, perhaps," he suggested with a whim-

sical lift in his voice. She bent forward again, an expression of delight on her face.

"If you come," she said, with sudden sincerity.

"I dare say I'll come," he remarked reflectively. "Though I heard them say we'd sail the day after to-morrow."

"No, there's something coming from Hamburg, and Don Orlando says it will be several days arriving."

"Cargo, you mean?"

She nodded.

"Well, I'm not saying anything positive. It's only something I heard the mate say."

"Is the—the mate like you?" she asked with charming wistfulness. He laughed shortly.

"Not so much! He has daughters, like you."

"Not on the ship?" she opened her eyes with a sudden drawing back of her head like a startled bird.

"Oh, no." James was amused at the peculiar illusions she possessed about their life on a ship. "They're at home in Glasgow." She laid her hand on his and looked at him with frank gratification. He rose hastily. "I'll be stepping."

"I shall be here after dinner to-night," she said, "perhaps nine o'clock."

"Well . . ." James touched his forehead in the way he had when pondering. "A man cannot always do as he wishes when he's under articles. I'll be trying, though." He looked down at her as he spoke and met the sensuous candour of her gaze. He thought again of warlike queens. James did not know much history, but he had an idea that warlike queens were necessarily different from ordinary women. The thought suddenly came to him that his own attitude toward them was far from clear. As he walked across the Plaza in the hot sunlight, his eye alert for a passing coach, he made the discovery that Yolanda de Mara was for him an extraordinary departure. Maria Chisola had been the embodiment of beauty and romance, and he had invariably imagined her eventually installed in the affections of his parents. Her scarlet tam o' shanter was a bright but homely symbol of a boyish romance. Miss Erskine, whose image still illumined the corridors of his memory like a receding radiance, was of his own race and breed. But that girl sitting by the window of the hotel was different. He discovered that he had no desire to tell anyone of their meeting. He could not imagine her in Radnor Street or in that second-hand bookstore on

Sauchiehall Street. It was not that he was ashamed, but rather that he was filled with the confusion and amazement of unsuspected resources in his own nature. Somehow the failure of that first conflict with life now justified him in striking out into the unknown. Miss Erskine, though she might not have seen the matter in exactly that light, had assumed that he was an independent personality, and she was partly responsible for his present mood of adventurous experiment. It was almost as though for the first time in his life he was stepping off the familiar solidity of the world on which he had been born, depending at last upon his own courage and skill, and something else of which he was not very conscious as yet—good fortune.

CHAPTER VI

CAPTAIN MILLERTON had amazed Mr. Barker by making no comment whatever upon the obvious absences on the staff during the morning. On this occasion he took a constitutional up and down the poop apparently oblivious of his surroundings. One of the winches got a wire rope jammed in its gear, and Mr. Barker himself assisted the two mates to clear it and reave a new wire, and Captain Millerton not only made no allusion to the episode but actually turned and went down into the cabin while it was in progress.

"He's either off his head with the heat or somebody's left him a fortune," said Mr. Barker. "I'd like to know what his game is." He wiped his hands on some waste and retired to his cabin, which was heated to an unendurable degree by the sun beating on the top and sides of naked iron. His mouth was bitter and dry. His heavy frame, encased in the layers of flesh that accumulate on men who have suddenly ceased active work after years of sweating toil, sank on the settee. The perspiration ran in streams from his face and down his hairy arms. A sudden disgust of himself and his way of life caused him to sit perfectly still for a moment. It was soon gone, but in that moment he saw himself from the outside, a man of ignoble desires and unworthy achievement. For a moment he was bereft of that belief in his own integrity without which no man can continue to live.

Mr. Barker's wife had died while he was in the army crossing the Tugela River. A photograph of her, a small eager woman with her hair in a bun, was screwed to the bulkhead over his bedplace. He did not think of her very often nowadays. They had never been more than a few weeks together and knew very little about each other. For Mr. Barker that brief union remained an experiment without result. He was constantly confused by the violent interest most men manifested in sex. He felt himself under an obligation to conceal his indifference under an assumed sensuality. He regarded women, nowadays, as merely negligible vehicles of dissipation ashore. His thoughts, his dreams, were occupied with a resentful contemplation of men who, like Cap-

tain Millerton, had got ahead of him in the game of eluding the wage system. He nursed a sour conviction that all success was a blend of cunning and luck. He had the cunning but without the luck it exhausted itself in petty squabblings. If he could only get a tow, like the old man! His idea would be to take a little public tavern on the Chester Road out of Wallasêy and have a bowling alley. This—— He brushed the sweat from his face and got up. When was that third coming back?

Mr. Barker's conjecture about Captain Millerton was not correct, but it was a good guess. Captain Millerton really was thinking that John Harkelaw had not known the half of it. And yet, had he not perhaps known it and accepted the peculiar conditions of commercial enterprise in Central America? It was, according to that dominating sarcastic visitor of the night before, Señor Don Orlando Perkins, of Perkins & Co., Striker-Perkins, Limited, and many other companies, a simple business. To Captain Millerton not so simple. He had been in the Canal Zone when the French were dying very fast indeed in the Chagres swamps, and he entertained an ineradicable dread of the Latin temperament set free from the bonds of discipline. He was also afraid of shoals. He possessed the deep-sea mariner's disgust and nervous dread of those treacherous, poorly charted coasts where the rivers emerged from behind long bars of ooze. Merely to contemplate on the chart the tortuous channels and the sprawling configurations of submerged sand banks scared him. They were forever changing with amœbalike uncertainty as the currents and winds scooped and piled, and the tides churned them into yellow waves edged with disagreeable foam. Afar off Captain Millerton had seen these rivers, and he had told Orlando Perkins in so many words that he didn't like the look of the business. To take the *Candleshoe* backward and forward from the huge swell of the open sea at Puerto Balboa to the Corcubion Delta, and eastward to the shallows of Rio Taga, depending on some scared little nit-wit of a Costaraguan pilot who was probably in the pay of the insurrectos, eh? Captain Millerton had found himself dodging the reflection of the cabin lamp in Don Orlando's monocle.

"You can go on shore and let the mate do it."

"He'd only do it once," muttered the captain, unable to resist a dig at Mr. Punshon. "He couldn't take a perambulator down the street."

"You chaps all go on like that about your assistants," Don

Orlando had remarked calmly. "Think I don't know? We have seven thousand hands on our plantations and in our mines. Fresh talent turning up every day. You'd be surprised how these chaps buck up when they get a chance. You don't know what you can do until you try, Captain."

"Ah, but if we touch, who's to get us off?" demanded Captain Millerton.

"Prayers will be offered for you in the churches," said Don Orlando quietly, and turning to the young Cuban, who was offering him some fresh papers, he changed the subject to the stowage of the cargo from Bremen, to be loaded in the morning.

The snub did Captain Millerton good. It reminded him of the youth he had left behind when he had run away from his ship in La Guayra and joined the local navy as navigating lieutenant of a man-o'-war whose chief engineer had taken the engines ashore piece by piece and sold them. Captain Millerton had helped sell the binnacle later. Spacious days! Rides up to Caracas to see the girls. Under his attitude of misanthropic pessimism Captain Millerton felt a glow. It was a bid for fortune. He tried to forget the millions Don Orlando would make and thought of his own good ship coming home.

This morning he was not so sure of himself. He had lain awake the night before contemplating the end of his years of thrifty vigilance and his final emancipation from the thralldom of the sea. But in the harsh hot sunlight of the morning he was disposed to reflect upon the risks rather than the reward. The whole business involved a change from his ordinary way of life. A ship captain is fundamentally conservative. Captain Millerton in his heart desired no change. He wanted to proceed from port to port, vigilant, faithful, and forever cantankerously hounding his crew into a state of savage misery. But he wanted this unusual piece of good fortune as well. He knew he would not get another chance like this. It was another tow. It was safety and almost opulence. He could retire later if he wished. He didn't intend to, yet. There is a rare delight to some spirits in wearing fetters to which they hold the key. Captain Millerton was one of those spirits. He was one of those men who accept with approval the austere laws of capitalism on the chance that their own turn to execute them will come some day.

But he was not so sure of himself this morning. And he was made uneasy by Rafael Alvarez, the steward, reporting the departure of the third engineer on a trip ashore. Captain Miller-

ton mentioned this to the mate at the cabin table. Dinner was at noon.

"Third's ashore, they tell me," he said.

"Back on board an hour ago, sir."

"Humph! Sober?"

"He seemed much as usual, sir," boomed Mr. Punshon. "Mr. Humphries is still ashore," he added in a lower tone.

The captain made no comment upon this. He knew by experience that Mr. Humphries was enjoying a little vacation. He was thinking of the chances of that young Wishart being in the know, as he put it, about the Costaraguan affair. He didn't want to split with anybody. It was the captain's conclusion, since he left Glasgow, that the less the crew knew of the future the better for everybody. He had already put it to Mr. Orlando Perkins that they would have to provide a bonus. Nothing demoralizing, of course. Captain Millerton fancied that too large a sum would leave the ship in a hole with the crew rioting ashore. Pay it afterward, perhaps. In that case they'd want to know what it was all about. He came back to the general regretful conclusion that men were troublesome and inefficient. Always wanting something that did them no good!

Mr. Barker, helping James to a slice of tough beef in the messroom, was being put in possession of the adventures of the morning up to the time Mr. Humphries sprang out of the carriage and vanished into Luiz' store.

"It would be just his style to go on a jag for the whole time we're here," he mused when the mess boy was out of ear-shot. "I'll not sail without him, though. This old man would be only too glad to lose him and take on some beachcomber out of a Norfolk coke ship."

James made a faint gesture of assent. Mr. Barker looked at him with sudden attention.

"See here, Mister," he said, "there's something funny about this trip. There's the young owner sending you down, for one thing."

"That was a purely accidental business," said James. "I happened to be out of a ship."

"And here's the lad got a yarn about the ship goin' on a time charter, Costaraguan articles. Maybe that's purely accidental, as you call it. I'm beginning to wonder what's in the wind. Passengers to Porto Balboa too, I hear. That long-eared Larry

of ours is full of pantry talk. People aboard last night, he's telling me."

"I saw them," said James. "Yon mess boy is a nosey lad, and so is the second mate," he added with emphasis.

"And I suppose the chief is too, hey?" snapped Mr. Barker.

"I didn't say so," pointed out James calmly. "The people aboard last night are taking passage with the cargo out of the German ship. Stuff for a railway, I hear."

"Well, there's Mannlicher rifles and cases of cartridges going in now, so I suppose they use them on the railway. And all that dynamite in the forehold from Kynochs, eh? Now, see here, Mister Wishart, I don't give a damn whether the owners sent you here or not. If the old man wants new articles he can have them, at new wages. Coast wages. If not, he pays us off, and here's one man as walks ashore."

"I'm staying by the ship."

"Well, the ship won't go far with ye unless the old man has the sense to put us where we belong. Are you not in the habit of staying by the ship?"

"Aye. I was just trying to make ye see I'm no liar. George Harkelaw said there might be changes and I was to stay and carry out orders."

"Well, Mister," said the chief irritably, "if you know anything, tell me. If you don't, ask me. There's trouble enough. The second is in a fix as it is."

James looked up from his plate and regarded Mr. Barker with a doubtful expression. A vague uneasiness which had come to the surface of his mind several times during the morning became a definite suspicion. He remarked:

"Chief, it's none o' my business, but the second seemed to me to have more on his mind than just a spree. Here's this two hundred dollars he's give me to keep for him. He seemed a wee bit leery this morning. And you know what you told me about that kid o' his. My gracious, but it scairt *me!*"

"You *saw* it?"

James nodded, and the chief engineer rubbed his jaw and pulled a long serious face.

"Mister Wishart, I'll tell ye something——" He paused and listened for sounds of approaching feet. "It's this way. She's in Puerto Balboa. The railway's bringing a lot of hard cases

there from the Canal Zone, there's the coffee farms sendin' down a lot more, and then, of course, there's the sort of boys who're always rovin' about these places. Floaters, they call them. Meaning they're not floating at all, but sunk. Down-and-outs."

"We'd call 'em ne'er-do-weels," said James.

"Oh! Well, Puerto Balboa's full of 'em, and so there's girls goin' too. Now I know the second, and I know what he'll do if he runs into this Gina over there."

"It's a pity," said James, touching his eyebrow in a way he had. "We'll keep the money in case he needs it there, then. The sea takes men different ways."

Mr. Barker did not reply. He was aware of this last great truth and was in no mood to discuss it. He studied the coarse tablecloth, with its extraordinary design of stains and blotches and darns, and appeared to be lost in contemplation.

"I'll step ashore this evening for awhile, if it suits your convenience, Chief," said James.

"Take a look at the boilers when you come aboard, then," said Mr. Barker rising. "I'll be sleeping to-night. We may sail to-morrow, the old man says."

It was during the afternoon, as he worked down below, that James found himself deliberating upon the wisdom of keeping that appointment with Yolanda de Mara. His concern was for Mr. Perkins. It seemed to James an unlawful thing to do, to have assignations with a girl engaged to marry some other man. But that shrug and that last glance of delicate provocation had implied that the girl herself required no moralizing from him. That indeed was the novelty of her to his inexperienced character. He had made not the slightest overtures to her. Yet she was committed to meeting him that evening at nine, and it appeared to James that he had desired this from the very moment of seeing her there by the window. He was somewhat bothered by the ease with which he accepted her view of the matter. He could not imagine—he realized at once that he was thinking of Yolanda de Mara and himself—leaving the girl to whom he was engaged to find pleasure in the company of a stranger. He simply could not imagine it. The idea carried with it a vision of a world of men and women pursuing with disdainful sophistication their fashionable careers through life. What had he, Jamie Wishart, to do with such people?

At such a question his native shrewdness and family pride came to his aid. So long as he did not cheapen himself he had no cause for regrets. And while he threaded his way deftly among his logical thoughts, the memory of the girl herself carried him with a rush of emotion far beyond them, and he wondered, half afraid, half amazed, what the future held for him. The failures of the past sank below the horizon and before his eyes floated that warm roseate glamour which is the dawn of love.

CHAPTER VII

HE COULD not see Yolanda, and the strange, unfriendly eyes of the crowds in the hotel foyer frightened him. And he was meditating a withdrawal to the street again when he saw Captain Millerton, guided by Don Orlando, move across the line of vision and enter an elevator. James was impressed by the captain's convivial gait. He was laughing, and he drew on a large cigar with none of his usual air of hurriedly discharging a disagreeable duty. James had a brief but illuminating glimpse of his commander not entirely in that state of stark and unhappy sobriety he always presented to the *Candleshoe*.

And the glimpse steadied him. He felt he was doing something himself which needed some sort of condonation from a shipmate. He moved forward across the foyer with the idea of asking the way to the garden when he saw it through the distant doors, a place of palms lighted by coloured globes, and with people strolling to and fro. He saw a white arm held aloft over a white face in the dusk, and the arm was beckoning to him. He went forward and discovered her, in a black sleeveless dress, which was merged in the darkness of the garden. He went up to her, and the brilliance of her eyes, the points of light from a crystal necklace on her bosom, and the burnished solidity of her coiled hair, enthralled him, so that he had nothing to say when she smiled and put her hand on his arm. They moved forward and were instantly in an odorous silence broken only by the sibilant hiss of footsteps upon paths around them. The strains of the orchestra in the hotel grew fainter. He heard her voice, with its precise, flat tones, saying that it was a hot night, and that she was tired to death of Havana after New York. So tired. . . .

He could think of nothing to say in reply to this save that he had never been to New York, but had heard there was good money to be made there.

"I hate money," she muttered. "I hate—oh, let us go away from this place!"

She held his arm tightly, and he remained still for a moment in sheer astonishment at the suddenness, the intensity, and the nature of her proposal. Go away—where? He uttered the question in an unsteady murmur, his mind swaying in a swirl of confused emotions.

"Anywhere—the Prado—the Malecon. I must go out. A drive—do you understand?"

James roused himself and took hold of the situation. Under cover of the darkness Yolanda de Mara had suddenly revealed an unsuspected world of unhappiness. Something in his innocent words had caused her assurance to give way.

"What's the matter?" he asked, as she sank upon a seat by the smooth, glistening trunk of a royal palm. Almost without being aware of what he was doing he sat down beside her. "Tell me," he added.

For a moment she sat there looking down at her hands, her head leaning a little toward him, as though ready for a protecting arm to be put around her. Suddenly she looked up at him, and putting her hands upon his she said:

"Nothing to you, perhaps. Only that I am alone. Can you understand?"

He made a vague gesture including in its shadowy implications the huge bright hotel, the jewels on her hands and neck and in her hair, the man whom she had called Don Orlando. She remained looking at him, aware of his perplexity, a faint smile on her seductive lips.

"You?" he said. "That's very difficult to believe."

"Not so very," she replied in the charming flat tone he liked, "if you knew who I am and how I came to be here. Will you take me for a drive? I am nearly dead here. It is so hot.

"Oh, surely," he exclaimed getting up. It was not hot to him, after his eastern experiences and accustomed to the regular life below; but he prepared to do as she wished. He was ready to carry out any commands she might lay upon him. He was under her spell. The appeal in her voice, and in the droop of her head toward him just then, was something he could not reason about. He looked down at her and made a suggestion.

"If you will come out in a minute or two," he said, "I will be there."

James hurried away. He wanted to know what it was all about. As he passed into the illuminated hotel, so full of soft sounds and oriental splendour, and thence into the racket of the

glittering square, with its sky signs flashing in red and white the names of beers, cigars, and theatres, it seemed to him he was leaving a period of his life behind him, closed and finished. And in front of him was a problem he had never even suspected until that moment.

His conception of Yolanda de Mara, the very basis of her fascination for him, had come from her imagined existence as a being of unapproachable wealth and magnificence of life, yet lending a magical glow to his own obscure progress by speaking to him and inspiring him with a renewed zest for the future. He was a very modest young man when estimating his own merits, and his plans were of the nature of no more than boyish dreams. But this was another matter. She had become suddenly human and near. She was in trouble. Well, he had some knowledge of trouble. It was gone now, but he remembered poignantly how he had felt as she said, alone. He wondered whether trouble was not the universal reagent for developing authentic feelings. He accepted with sober delight the trust she was placing in him. It made him realize the emptiness he had been carrying about in his breast since he had come home from the last voyage. A sort of numbed place instead of a warm living consciousness. There was a springiness in his step as he crossed the stream of carriages and motor cars and hailed a driver. The carriage came to a stop in front of the hotel. James looked out from under the dark wood with boyish excitement in his eyes. Once or twice he pressed his lips together as a wave of emotion swept over him. This was the first adventure upon which he had ever launched. Suddenly he discovered that the woman in a long black silk coat trimmed with white fur and with a black lace scarf on her head coming down the broad steps was Yolanda. He jumped out to assist her. She gave him a vivid, penetrating glance as she put her hand in his, and then, sinking back into the darkness, she ordered the driver in Spanish to go along the Prado to the sea.

CHAPTER VIII

OUT there on the Malecon Wall, beyond the lights of the pleasure parks and with the sea curdling over the black rocks below them, Yolanda de Mara told him. She told him sitting on the low wall, among the humble folk taking the air, as some celestial being might tell an earth-born wanderer of what went on beyond the stars. Some feeling of this came to her mind as she spoke, and she looked up into his listening, puzzled face and smiled, her lips just revealing a gleam of white teeth as she shook her head slightly.

"No?" she asked. "You don't understand what I say?"

"Surely," he countered. "I am thinking about what you say. And I like," he added bashfully, "to hear your voice."

She stared at him incredulously, and then, stretching out her bare white arms, put her hands on his shoulders with a grave gesture of comprehension.

It began, that story of Yolanda's, in the days when Costaragua was an almost unknown country. It was a country without a port, without a railroad or a telegraph wire. The coast lay open to the immense westerly roll of the Caribbean, which came in at racing speed upon the white beaches littered with rotting cocoanuts blown from the plantations, and burst in dull thunder echoing back from the walls of impenetrable jungles. Beyond lay the barrier ranges, dim blue in the heat, with crests of snow to the westward where the shadowy summit of Albatorre was lost in vaporous clouds. In those days there was Rio Taga, a cluster of miserable wattled hovels on the edge of a vast curve in the coast, where turtle schooners anchored while trading with the local costenos. There was Esmeralda Cay, which was now Strikers' Cay, and the bulwark of Puerto Balboa, built below the red bluffs beyond which the Corcubion River, after its furious journey down from the plateau, moved majestically toward the sea, and escaped, with deep-toned bellowings on windy nights, over a sinister and treacherous bar. And that was all you could find of human enterprise in Costaragua in those days until you reached Ortygia, the ancient capital far up the Corcubion Valley.

Ortygia had been destroyed during the war between the Separationists and the Federalists, and the Church had used the awful doom of the rebels to point the moral of their plea for allegiance to the League. While Federal troops were surrounding Ortygia, an earthquake had buried the insurgent inhabitants, leaders and followers, in great crevasses suddenly opening under them, engulfing the very houses which they were fortifying and the churches where they prayed. The besiegers had seen the long walls of Spanish brick waver and collapse and had crossed themselves in superstitious horror. The crater of Mount Cornaru, away to the southward, had shot up in flames of dull red, and the lava, darting through the riven shoulder of the mountain, had poured down to the valley, blocking the river amid a series of gigantic explosions as the water became imprisoned in masses of molten earth. That had happened fifty years ago. It had been the end of Ortygia and the beginning of San Benito, high up on the cool central plateau. The Corcubion now made a huge jagged detour through a gorge cluttered with enormous boulders, over which the waters roared in the rainy season with a sound reverberating against the black walls glistening with spray and arched by short, broad rainbows.

"The family of my mother," said Yolanda gazing down at the foam spreading with a stealthy, almost intelligent movement over the rocks, as though it were hurriedly searching for something left in the countless crevices, "the family of my mother was in Ortygia at the time. She was a baby. They found her under the fallen house playing in her cradle—the only one left alive of that name. Many families were entirely destroyed in that single moment, you might say. The revolt was so completely crushed—by the hand of God, the priests said—that the Federalists were everywhere victorious, Costaragua was brought into the League of the Captaincy General, and the only difference between that and Spain was that the Spaniards were *caballeros* and the others were no account."

"So," she went on, "my mother grew up in San Benito, in the family of the Federal military leader General Umberto de Bustillo. He wasn't no account. He was with Bolívar at Boyaca. But there were Hondurans and Yucatecanos in the League. Panamans and Salvadorenos. They were in for what they could get out of Costaragua. It was through General Bustillo the League was broken up. He was rich. He had estates. He got them—well, in his own way."

"How?" asked James in a puzzled tone.

"Well, if he hadn't got them the big men in the other republics, who were always hanging round the council chamber, would have bid in for them. That was the game, you see. General Bustillo bought them from the families of mestizos who had been ruined by the civil war. He prevented foreigners from getting control of the logwood trade."

"And made money for himself—I see," said James.

"And when he died he left an estancia on the coast to my mother. You don't understand what that meant in Costaragua. My mother, when she was twenty, was the only woman in the country who owned any land. And she was very pretty."

"Like you, Miss de Mara?"

"Not at all like me," the girl replied looking at James calmly. "She was dark and very small. Uncle Umberto, the general, used to say the Ortygia Olivares had Maya blood in them more ancient than any Spanish grandees who came from Andalusia. Not at all like me. I am like my father, you see, who married her for the estancia."

"That was bad," said James.

Yolanda smiled.

"Of course, she had to marry somebody. But he left her down there in the hot lands while he was working in the mountains. He was from Chile, an engineer on the railway. Don Orlando was building the line up to Albatorre. It only went as far as the river in those days. My father was always going up to San Benito to have a good time. He was what you might call a sport. He needed so much, my father."

She paused and stared hard at the young man sitting on the coping facing her, as though she wished to see how this information affected his composure. Perhaps she was reassured. James did not give any sign of disapproval. He merely asked her why she hated money.

Her expression became contemptuous.

"Money! Do *you* like it?" she demanded in a low intense voice.

"Aye, I like to hear the clink of it," he answered with composure, "if I've earned it."

She turned away and looked out to sea. And then she shrugged her shoulders.

"You should rise out of that," she muttered, and he wondered what she meant by rising.

"Your father——" he began. She turned on him at once.

"—was a *caballero,*" she said coldly. "It was necessary for him to have an estate. He had had to leave Chile during a revolution. My mother was very much in love with him. It is true he did not treat her well. *Caballeros* have faults, of course."

She paused, brooding upon the beauty of the sea, as though she doubted the propriety of admitting that the men she called *caballeros* had faults. James, who had heard the word before in the course of his life, understood well enough that she meant gentry, and he was already aware that such people entertained ideas concerning money differing from those current in the world of commerce and trade. He was overawed by the girl's bodily presence. It seemed only in keeping with the shining splendour of her personality to despise money. He could not imagine her harassed by the meannesses of life.

"I was only going to say that your father perhaps had suffered some misfortune," he remarked in his even tones. She put her hand on his arm and patted it gently.

"That is true," she murmured. "My mother, left alone at La Esperanza, died soon after I was born. My father came down from San Benito at once, but it took several weeks to reach the coast in those days. He was sick with grief. He was young and very popular in the capital. He left me with the sisters of St. Candelaria, and returned to San Benito. Everybody wished to go to San Benito. My father is not to be blamed. He was young and popular. He became engaged, after two years' mourning, to one of the English Bustillo girls who was spending the dry season in San Benito. Perhaps—who knows?—if he had lived I should have lived in your country, an Englishwoman! But that was not to be. My father, as you say, suffered misfortune."

She paused again and James was aware of a profound pleasure in watching her face in profile as she sat looking across the waters to Morro Castle. In the shadow of the grim fortress lay the *Candleshoe,* yet James could scarcely credit the fact that he was a seaman aboard that old ship. It seemed rather that he had escaped, somehow, into a new and entrancing world with the exquisite being who sat with her hand on his arm, telling him the tale of her life in a country beyond the frontiers of his own experience. There was to him a sensuous delight in the contrast between her sombre dress and her white bosom, between the black lace shawl now lying athwart her shoulders and the bronze

sheen of her hair. The loveliness of her person, the flawless perfection of her round white arms, the poise of her supple body as she sat on the coping of the Malecon, was to him like an incredible yet tangible legend of romance. And there was her voice, so musical in his ears, a sound like a long-forgotten amorousness of the soul seeking a refuge from the chilling air of the spirit world. He waited in a mood of solemn excitement for her to go on.

"You do not know my country," she said. "Costaragua is not like Europe, or North America. The peons do not understand anything except what the priest tells them. Every year there is an attempt to start a revolution. People become very tired of that and they prefer a dictatorship. They can get in the harvest then; the coffee, the cacao, the henequen, and the chicle can reach Puerto Balboa, and then London and Hamburg and New York. Perhaps they are taxed, but they have something to pay taxes with. In a revolution the soldiers are quartered on them and steal all the time. Well, my father, up there in San Benito, got into a set of young revolutionaries. They called themselves Sons of Light. They used to meet in an old Maya temple in the Upper Valley of Las Esmeraldas. The dictator, Francisco Urdenata, knew all about it. He let them go on with their meetings, and some of his own men became Sons of Light. When he was ready a bomb blew up his house on the Avenida de Bolivar. He was away, of course, and it was an old house heavily insured. The Sons of Light were arrested in their homes, and martial law proclaimed. That is the regular thing in such cases. Martial law. The dictator produced evidence that the Sons of Light had plotted to destroy the head of the state. My father's name was among those who had planned the revolt which was to follow the death of Urdenata. You have never heard of Urdenata, have you? I suppose so. Well, he was not simply a dictator. He used to boast he was a student of history. He said he wished to be remembered as an enlightened despot. He ordered them into exile. They were taken down to Puerto Balboa, where we are going, and put on board a small steamer bound for Colon. They tried to seize the ship, so the story goes, and sail for Europe, but they were overpowered and shot down. And so, you see, I am alone in the world."

Once again she paused and looked out to sea. Yet her pose was that of one intent on the effect she was producing. She seemed to be listening, as though from beneath a colossal burden

of misfortune, for him to take a signal that he was standing by. He took her hand, with a sudden display of emotion very unusual for him, and leaned toward her.

"Will you not go on," he said in a low tone, "and tell me all about it? How you came to be here and all the rest. It's all very strange."

"Will you be my friend and help me?" she demanded. "I will tell you. You saw that man I call Don Orlando? My friend in the hotel? Well, I am in his power."

"In his power?" echoed James. He was not very clear as to her meaning. He could accept the distant tyrant Urdenata, supreme dictator of Costaragua, but to bring the story so close to himself was disturbing. Mr. Perkins was English, surely. He was, James imagined, a gentleman. A passenger.

"That is what I said," returned Yolanda. "He is my guardian. The very clothes I wear are bought with his money. His father bought La Esperanza from mine, and the money was spent long ago."

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"It was because I was adopted by the old Don Orlando," she said. "He intended to leave money for me, but he died suddenly while in the province of Las Esmeraldas, where he was inspecting a platinum mine he had discovered on the Colorado River. It was near where my father was taken. It was supposed—but that does not matter—he had an interest in my mother, who was an Olivares. He had no sons. He adopted this man because of an interest. . . . What do I know? A rich caballero must have a son. This man's father was an Englishman who had saved the life of Don Orlando in a fight with the bandits of Las Esmeraldas. He took Don Orlando's name and grew up as the son. Well, he was in New Orleans when I was left there a baby, and the old Don's daughters, when he was buried, put me out of the house. I was taken away to a servant's house in San Benito. That was fate again. But for this man I would have become a servant."

She paused, as though stupefied into silence by the contemplation of such a fate.

"But he came back at once when he heard the news, and he asked what had become of the child Yolanda. I was very pretty then. His sisters, the married daughters of Don Orlando, the Señoras Obregon and Abrines, told him that I was sent away.

They were Alvarados on their mother's side, and they were hereditary enemies of the Olivares. Don Orlando was in a rage. He said he inherited the guardianship. He was head of the house. And he sent to find me and put me with the Sisters of St. Candelaria. Everything he paid for. He sent me to a school in Paris for a year. Then I go to New York, you see. He is my guardian. I am his property. And sometimes I cannot decide whether I am to go on or to kill myself. I think of my life if he had left me with those good people in San Benito. I would have been a *camerista,* a chambermaid, a *creada,* as we say, and have had a happy life."

She looked round at the shining curve of the street. The coaches were now passing only a few at a time. James regarded her with an expression of distress on his face. He was baffled by the sinister character she gave the man he had seen in the hotel and on the *Candleshoe.*

"Is he not kind to you?" he asked.

"Yes, he is kind, in the way we are kind to animals," she said. "In my country, long, long ago they used to sacrifice girls. They kept them until they were ready and then they took them to a little lake, very deep and with high banks, where the water is dark green, and threw them in. If they could swim it was no use; they could not get out. At last they drowned in the *cenote.* I am in a *cenote,* you see. I can't get out."

She suddenly turned her gaze upon him, as though to gauge the impression she was making upon him.

"There is a lake like that in the forest near Cordoba, where we wait for the *lancha* to take us down the river. I have seen it. Near it is a stone, an enormous stone, which is carved in the shape of a great serpent coiled around itself, like a great knot. They say that in the coils, crushed to pulp, is a woman. I don't know. I think that woman is me."

"No!" said James sharply. "No!"

"You don't know," she exclaimed. "I am his possession. He says he will marry me, and I am afraid of that. I know his character. He was born in Costaragua, his mother was a Russian woman who escaped from Siberia and came to Costaragua where the Russian government could not arrest her. Yet he is very English, like his father in many things. Do you know that a man whose father is English but who has a foreign mother is always cruel to women? Yes, I have seen it often in my country."

James said nothing. He was beyond his depth. He turned this strange statement upon himself. It was, after all, only a foreign exaggeration of his parent's belief that one should marry one's own kind. He was a steady young man. Even when he was beyond his depth he did not lose his balance and presence of mind. He might be in love, but he knew what he was doing. And he waited.

"In many things." She repeated. "His father was . . . a great *caballero* in your country. He saw the coats of arms carved over the doorways in San Benito, and he ordered one for himself. He gave the carvers a picture in a gold frame. Everybody knows the tale up there. A picture of his coat-of-arms. It is there now in marble over a door in the Calle Taragona. A shield with a falcon swooping down on a dove. He said it was older than the Alvarados and the Robles and Davilas. And this son Orlando, because he has taken the name of Perkins, he cannot use his father's coat-of-arms. But he has the picture in the gold frame in his house, a black falcon dropping down like a stone on a white dove."

She gave the young man a quick glance. Something in his expression told her he did not grasp the significance of the symbol. She put her hand on his arm.

"Listen," she said sharply. "I said I was his possession. But not his only possession. He has many girls. I am for his pride and they are for his amusement. To-night he has an assignation with a girl from the opera house. A French girl. I have seen her. She is beautiful. In New Orleans it was the same. And in Ortygia, the old capital, he has a friend. For amusement. That is why I say he is like his father, who was shot from behind by a *mozo*. This man was the lover of a girl in Caravosa, who left him for the Englishman. Shot dead on the trail. And when the girl heard the news she went back to her lover. She helped him to escape into Las Esmeraldas, where he could join an army of robbers. When they were safe from the soldiers she waited till he was asleep and stabbed him. Then she rode back to San Benito on his mule and told what she had done. She is fat and ugly now. She sells lottery tickets in the streets and listens at keyholes for the secret police. Don Orlando gives her ten pesos a month because he says she is an old family servant. Do you know what she will do? I had a friend who

loved me. He was ready to die for me. Don Orlando hired her to put revolutionary books and letters in his house, and the police found them and took him away."

"Would he do that?" said James in astonishment.

"That is the way they do things in my country," she said. "This friend," she looked at James with a sort of passionate contemplation, "was ready to give his life for me. This man, Don Orlando, who is a senator from the Camagua Valley, was able to put him in prison."

"But how could I be of any help?" asked James.

"Because he thinks you will be useful to him," she replied. "He wants young foreign men in Costaragua. And that," she added, "is why I speak to you. I must have a friend in his confidence."

"Still I do not see," said James.

"He will be the owner of your ship."

"Eh?" James bent forward sharply. "You say he will own the ship?"

"Yes," she said, smiling. "Your captain has had a telegram. Don Orlando is to buy the ship at Puerto Balboa. The telegram came to-night."

James, touching his eyebrow with his forefinger, recalled what George Harkelaw had said about staying on the ship. He drew a long breath.

"It is the railway," she went on in a low tone. Her words dragged, as though she spoke through an uneasy dread of saying too much. "The Striker-Perkins interests are supporting the government against the Agrarians, who want to stop the railway. It is difficult," she added, "to explain to you. You do not understand my country. Don Orlando is a partner in the railway concession, the Ferro Carril Central de Costaragua. The old don owned it, and it was bought by Don Orlando and Don Francisco Striker, an English engineer. They are very powerful, but the great cattle and coffee men in the Camagua Department detest the railway. They wish to revoke the concession. They want to keep the country to themselves. The Bustillos are Agrarians. But the president, Don Hernando Silva, is married to a Bustillo, and he is a Liberal."

"What can a fellow like me do in all this?" he asked her quietly. There was no fear in James Wishart's voice. It was merely a statement of what his solid sense knew to be a fact.

He could not, for instance, fly or fight an army. He would say so in similar tones. She looked at him.

"Will you not help me, then?" she asked.

"I did not say that," he protested. "What I do not see is how a man like me can help you."

"How do you know what a man like you can do?" she demanded. "Listen. Don Orlando Perkins, the old man, swore he would carry his railway up the mountains if he had to hang it by balloons. One day, when Manuel Uribe was president, to please the Agrarians of the plateau, he put a tax on wheat. The poor costenos, the Indios of the coast, were starving. The tax kept out foreign flour, and the Agrarians charged high prices. Don Orlando rode up to San Benito with a few friends and demanded Don Manuel change the tax. He told him there would be a revolution and foreign warships would come. The president had Don Orlando arrested, and the people, when they heard it, went mad at once. It was a terrible time. But Don Orlando won. The tax was taken off, and ships came with flour from New Orleans. The Agrarians never forgave Don Orlando. They dared not say so, but they hated him and his ideas and his railway, and now they hate this man who inherited the concession and is as brave as a lion.

"Why do they want the railway so bad?" asked James. To be irritable and ferocious about a railway was something he had never thought possible.

"Have you ever seen a country without a railway?" asked Yolanda in turn. She was amused and spoke easily, and indeed she was aware of many things in the world beyond his experience, although she was calling him to her assistance. James, in fact, had never seen such a country. He thought for an instant of India and remembered then how the tracks covered that land like a net of steel. He had not reflected upon the matter. He took railways as he took ships, very much for granted. As far as he knew, they were everywhere.

Yolanda did not ask this question by design, but she could have said nothing to bring home the whole problem quickly to a mind like James Wishart's. Vaguely yet powerfully there came to him a picture of the country of which she spoke, and a hint of its problems. It had not occurred to him either that anyone in the world would try to prevent railways. It was an extraordi-

nary state of affairs. He saw that. He understood her question. He said, no doubt it was slow going by road.

"*Road!* You think there are *roads?* There are trails over the mountains, there is the old Spanish Camino Real out of Ortygia, but there are no roads. There is the river as far as Cordoba, and then the mule trail through Caravosa and Ronda. Now can you understand?"

James looked up whimsically into the bright beautiful face with the brilliant eyes and made a faint yet eloquent gesture of apology and assent. He saw something in that face he had not been aware of before. He began to wonder if the fear in her heart, the fear inspiring her to seek his aid, did not after all derive from the nature of the country to which she was returning. He remembered her abstracted remark early in the evening, that she hated it. He gained a faint appreciation of something which later on took possession of his mind like a nightmare—that a place can assume a sinister aspect of its own, a dark malignity of bearing. There was even a hint, in the expression of her face, of the eternal war going on in her blood between the echoing desires of old Europe and the obscure legacies of her mother's aboriginal ancestors.

"A little," he answered gently.

"And if the river is low, you cannot get up at all," she went on, staring at him. "Weeks and weeks in the hotel at Puerto Balboa, while the Señora Munn plays whist in her private parlour and lets the servants do as they like."

"Who's Señora Munn?" asked James, smiling.

"She's the hotel keeper. She owns Pension Francia, named after Don Francisco Striker, the railway builder. She had a love affair with him years ago, she says, the old liar!" And Yolanda laughed maliciously.

"Yes!" she went on, "sometimes a month on the way to San Benito. The rancheros liked it. They did not want to have people coming up the river. You know they say Don Sebastiano Rivas, the last president, once went down as far as San Paulo. The river is very wide there and rushes over great rocks. 'O Blessed Virgin!' he said, 'so that is the terrible ocean!' And he refused to go any further. He was a hundred miles from Puerto Balboa, but no one had the courage to tell him so. He is very pious, you understand." Yolanda turned to James and, seeing the look of incredulity on his honest face, slipped to the ground

and put her hands on his shoulders again. "No," she said softly, "you do not understand. This——" she swept her gaze round upon the glittering city—"and the sea is life! How can I make you feel what I feel? I do not wish to go up there again." She shuddered and, closing her eyes, laid her coiled bronze hair against his breast. "I am alone—help me."

James, with a sudden movement, as though he had arrived at a mature decision, put his arm around the girl and gave her a reassuring embrace.

"I'll do just that," he remarked. "From what you tell me, I do not like yon friend of yours. But we'll be going to Puerto Balboa, anyhow. We'll see what's to do when we get there."

She looked up at him silently as they began to walk slowly round the great curve toward the Prado. She was extraordinarily happy beneath her mood of distress. She began to perceive unexpected strength in the young man's character reserves of power. She knew enough of the world of men to comprehend her good fortune in finding, when she sought a friend, one of this kind. There was an obscure delight to her in the discovery that her success lay not so much in the seductive quality of her personality as in the appeal of her extraordinary predicament. Indeed, the former had almost alarmed the young man. That early and stupefying impression he had gained of her, as a warlike queen with a golden helmet, had been intoxicating but bizarre to his modest way of thinking. Now he was absorbed in the problem of extricating her from her plight. He was moved beyond his own belief by the sinister character of her destiny if she once more went up to that city which was, she had muttered in a frightened way, "above the clouds." He could not blame her. She was so warmly alive within his arm, and the exquisite plenitudes of her body thrilled him.

"Let us walk a little way," she whispered. "Do you like to walk with me?"

"Yes," he said, and the brevity of his answer delighted her. She laughed.

"If you were a Costaraguan *caballero* you would have said that walking with me was like walking in heaven with the saints. Or perhaps you would have said that before it was deepest night but now the glory of the sun was all around you." And she regarded him with a sly glance.

"I cannot say things like that," said James in a harsh embarrassed tone. "There's no sense in such talk."

"No," she agreed with a faint chuckle and a quirk of her lips as she pressed closer to him. "I said I liked you to-day. Did you think I was wrong to say that?"

"No," said James, frowning, "it began then, you understand."

"What began? Oh, you began to think about me?"

"No. I began to think about you last night."

"You did? But you didn't know there was such a girl in the world last night," she protested.

"Oh, yes, I did. I heard your name."

"Tell me," she urged, pausing, "who spoke my name?"

"Your friend, when he came on the ship to see the old man. He wanted the gangway down. Said Yolanda wouldn't like the rope ladder for coming on board. Now there's a thing," mused James, as they crossed the street. "Why did he curse those two boatmen in English when they were Spanish chaps and he knows their lingo?"

"That's one of his ways," she said in a low voice. "He never speaks Spanish if he can help it. He regards himself as an Englishman always."

"Humph, I see. He was mindful of you, though."

"No!" she spoke with a rising inflection. "He was mindful of his own dignity. He was mindful of me only because he considers me one of his possessions. Of me, as myself, never!"

She spoke the last sentence with a sudden violence, as though a fresh aspect of her degradation had opened before her. She shrank even more closely into the embrace of her companion. He, for that matter, became aware at once of the demoralizing delight of his situation and of his incredible character. The destiny befalling the girl was no more to him, at that moment, than a warrant authorizing his pursuit of a sensuously sweet fruition of his laborious days. It was the first spiritually adult moment of his life. He saw himself apart from all the closely meshed integument of society and discipline in which he had grown up. There suddenly flashed across his mind a hint of the reason why a Latin-American would have availed himself of extravagant hyperbole in such circumstances. James saw his own horizon fretted with the far battlements of romantic beauty. He comprehended for the first time how a man must on occasion abandon caution and careful calculation and ride recklessly forward in order to cross the perilous causeways which lead to fortune.

"I am thinking," he said, "what I could do to get you away from this."

"If you knew," she said, stopping, "would you do it?"

"Aye, I'd do it," he said with an ardent innocence of heart. She stood looking up at him in wonder. "Tell me," he added.

"Marry me?" she said, and watched the young man's head bend down and down toward her. What he saw on her face was a tense little smile, as though she had done something that filled her with terror and delight.

CHAPTER IX

MR. BARKER'S prophecy came true. Mr. Humphries remained ashore. His reappearance on the *Candleshoe* took place very early in the morning of sailing and was accompanied by the sounds of the first lighter of the day bumping alongside. Mr. Punshon, peering over the side in the clear twilight thrown by the heights to the eastward, saw the second engineer grasp the rope ladder and swing off the lighter. Captain Millerton, whom the first cracking of steam in the deck pipes would bring out in an old gray muffler and cap, saw his second engineer balance himself on the bulwarks and then take a quick elegant spring to the deck. Mr. Humphries dived into the engineer's scuttle and was seen no more until the *Candleshoe* was making for the Yucatan Channel, which leads southerly into the Caribbean Sea.

It was evening when he slowly roused from a sleep that seemed at times, even to Mr. Barker, looking in upon him in sour silence, to resemble death. It might have been more accurately described as a transmigration of Mr. Humphries' soul. It was the tunnel through which he returned, in utter darkness, from a region of extraordinary light and gaiety. Ashore in Havana he had been leading the existence of methodical dissipation which he called a good time. He had remained for long periods in that condition of alcoholic equilibrium which seems to float up from forgotten depths in a man's nature the ultimate racial characteristics and animosities. He had on one of these occasions confronted Rafael Alvarez, the steward, and frightened him half to death. The half-breed had shrunk back from that dreadful unshaven figure wavering before him like something entangled at the bottom of the sea. It was as though a nodding and impotent tribal god were tottering from out of the darkness. There had been an expression of meditative ferocity on Mr. Humphries' face which had set the other man skimming away up the street into light and safety. Mr. Humphries had followed him on a dogged yet uneven course, and had found himself between the theatre and the hotel, amid the throng of men and women going home. He

had looked into the faces of girls and startled them with the gleam in his eyes, the dark growth of bristle on his jaw and the condition of his hat and clothing. The perfumes and the soft lustre of eyes and jewels had assailed his drunken senses like mocking airs from siren isles. "Come and buy me!" they seemed to whisper. "No, me! I am more desirable. I am proud. Wear me like a jewel. . . . I know all the secrets of love. I can teach you many pleasures. . . ." He had seen a man with a short yellow beard and an eyeglass hand a magnificent woman into a carriage, a woman whose superb arms and bosom gleamed white in contrast with her dress of dark crimson.

The thoughts had hurtled and collided in his brain, the brain of a shrewd and desperate slave, whose tongue had been cut and who had been uttering within himself inarticulate cries for the sweet flesh of captive queens. He had moments of ecstasy as he swayed among the groups and couples surging into the hotel. Once he found himself looking into the eyes of a girl with bright bronze-coloured hair who was attended by a flat-faced Cuban servant girl. He had blundered against her and had been so close that the perfume of her clothes had reached his senses, and he had seen down into a swelling bosom so white the recurring memory of it made him feel faint with desire. He remembered her face—one of those faces which had always been for him inaccessible and yet rowelling his heart with their bitter scornful beauty. And then she was gone, leaving him with slack mouth and slowly sobering mind, to wander onward.

He lay long now, recapturing the episodes of his debauch. Somehow, at the back of his mind was a dreadful suspicion that his thoughts had been illusions, that no woman could teach him anything more of love. Behind the contempt for the objects of his desire, behind the weary disgust with which he regarded himself, lay a memory of the girl Gina. It was characteristic of him that he had nothing of her save that memory, which had lain buried and apparently dead beneath the rough débris of the years. He stared at the bulkhead at his feet and thought of her once more. Up there in Animas Street he had seen her coming slowly down the stairs. How many years ago was that? Must be six. He remained rigid for a moment, like a man who had become aware, unexpectedly, of the sinister character of Time. Relaxing, a wave of extraordinary and tragic pride took possession of him, a sudden rise to consciousness of the underlying conviction of his life, that Gina had been for him Fate, had been

the channel through which he had reached both romance and reality, had fused them together in a sharp, uncontrollable agony of shameless passion. He had looked up from where he sat among the courtesans, the bony and corpulent wastage of the city. He had seen Gina, and had risen, in response to some obscure incomprehensible instinct, to reach out and bar her departure. It was the most direct approach that any man could devise, stripped of the soft draperies of conventional ceremony. So quick he was, yet from her great black eyes, set in the pure pallor of her young face, there flashed an answering recognition of his own discovery, the gleam of a sombre smile at his impetuous onslaught, a haughty pride in her power, which could abolish those other women around him, so that he forgot their existence, brushing past their clutching hands like a man beholding a glorious vision. He recalled that moment now with sullen remorse and pride. It had been the beginning of a week of unpremeditated ecstasy. For once in his life Mr. Humphries had known a woman and happiness, too preoccupied with the essential necessities of his being to consider the strange surroundings of such a romance. Even now he cherished no regret for such irrelevances. What gripped his soul in torment was the memory of how he had gone away when his ship sailed, leaving Gina without a word. The episode had ended there, or so he thought, a superb delirium of delight. He saw now that what he had done had been despicable. The other day, when he had suddenly caught sight of the child, his child and Gina's, he suffered the tortures of a damned soul . . . had snatched it away from him. Well, she was right, he conceded sullenly. He had no claim now. And following these miserable memories came the news, flung at him by Faustine, that Gina was in Puerto Balboa. Six years. What might they not have done to that pale, seductive girl? He stirred at the thought, shut his eyes, and opened them wide in a vindictive glare, and then, as though to escape the dreadful thoughts crowding close upon him at this moment of lowest vitality, turned to the open scuttle and looked along the after deck toward the poop.

Mr. Humphries released a strong phrase under his breath. It was not to be held against him that he should have been extravagantly astonished. He paused for a moment, to convince himself, by listening to the beat of the propeller, by staring out at the wide empty blue of the sky, that they were at sea. And then he bent his gaze once more at the sight of Mister Wishart,

that third engineer, seated on the after hatch engaged in conversation with a girl who leaned on the poop rail above him.

Nor was this the total of his amazement. When she stood up for a moment, one hand on the rail, and pointed with a bare white arm emerging from a rough English cloak toward the Cuban shore, Mr. Humphries experienced a touch of vertigo. He remembered that face in front of the hotel, crowned with lustrous bronze hair. And as she rested her arms once more upon the rail and smiled in a way that was both tender and imperious upon the young man below, an expression of sardonic contempt suffused the unlovely face contemplating them from the round opening in the bulkhead. But in a moment it faded, and Mr. Humphries, once more in a maze of conjectures as he strove to account for the fabulous nature of the scene outside, not altogether certain that he might yet wake up and discover the *Candleshoe* still in Havana, swung his legs over the bunk board and collapsed on the floor.

Weak and sick, he sat on the settee and began to piece together the facts of his condition. He was on board, and she was away to Puerto Balboa. The chief was a good scout. This held him while he attempted to put on a pair of trousers and discovered apathetically that he was already dressed. The chief was one of the immovable facts of Mr. Humphries' life. He knew about Gina. The chief had saved his life on the Ridge when they lay there in the daylight glare of the searchlights. The chief had rolled him out of the way after he had been knocked silly by a bullet banging him over the ear. The chief had kept him all these years. He was on the point of becoming maudlin over the chief when Mr. Barker decided to make another attempt, and opened the door.

"You're not dead, then," he muttered.

"You know damn well I'm not dead," retorted Mr. Humphries bitterly, feeling for his slippers with his bare feet. "You'd never have had the gall to leave Havana with me dead or dying."

"Oho!" remarked Mr. Barker. He was in his working clothes; in fact, he was keeping Mr. Humphries' watch for him. He set himself against the door jamb and put one hairy arm athwart the opening. "Oho! Sets the wind in that quarter? I say, Mister," he went on, changing to a crisp tone which those who knew him associated with business, "do you know it's nearly supper time and you're supposed to be on watch? You might as well have been dead, so far. How long do you think I'm

goin' to keep your watch as well as my own? Answer that!"

"Well, I'm coming, I should say." The second stood up and glanced through the scuttle along the deck. "While the third engineer disports himself in a white coat with his lady friends."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked the chief engineer. "Is he to ask your permission? You'd better get yourself a shave and a bath before you try to cut him out," he grunted. "Have a look in the glass."

The second, instead of acting upon this advice, turned a black look upon Mr. Barker.

"I've a bone to pick with that piece of goods," he snarled, hitching his belt. "And I'll introduce myself when it's convenient."

"You've a watch to keep first," said Mr. Barker quietly, "unless the drink is not out of your brain yet. You and your bones to pick! Where would you see her before?"

"Never you mind," whimpered the second. "I've been in hell oftener than you think. As for the watch, I like to see you standing there telling me what I've got to do. Who else 'ud work his soul out for you like I do? Me with a chief's ticket!"

"I'll give you a bump on the jaw to add to your grievances if you want me to," said the chief, turning away. Larry, the boy, came down the ladder at this moment, and the chief ordered him curtly to get the second some hot tea at once.

Mr. Humphries, having lighted a cigarette, took another look through the scuttle and, seeing the same sight, climbed the companion. Setting himself in a convenient position by the bulwarks, he waited to catch the third engineer's eye. James Wishart was not looking forward at all. He was glancing sometimes at the deck at his feet, sometimes at the Cuban coast, but chiefly up at the face of Yolanda de Mara. The pose gave him an expression of unusual refinement and spirituality. No man can appear very evil when looking upward. James was not evil in aspect at any time. The same spirit of gentleness and unaffected breeding which had affected Miss Erskine and Yolanda de Mara now inspired Mr. Humphries with profound disgust. Nevertheless, there was something about the girl on the poop which decided the second to remain where he was. At length James Wishart happened to glance in his direction and came toward him.

"You wanting me, Mister?" said James easily.

"Aye," said the second in a low tone, staring gloomily over the side. "Who's that on the poop?"

"A passenger," said James, surprised.

"Oh, dear me! We're carryin' passengers! A friend of yours, I see."

"I had a word with her ashore," was the reply.

"Well, I seen her ashore, come to that." He stole a look at Yolanda, whose figure was outlined in vigorous relief by the breeze pressing the clothes to her body. "I admire your taste, Mister," the second went on. "I'll be speaking to her myself when I come off watch, tell her."

"Oh, no," said James. "You'll do no such thing. She has nothing to say to you, Mister Humphries."

Mr. Humphries stared at the worn, clean, yellowish-white tunic with the green-stained brass buttons, and his nose twitched as he threw up his chin.

"So that's it, is it?" he queried. "You wait!" He looked aft again at the girl, who was replacing the cloak about her and touching the bronze coils of her hair. "You wait!" he repeated, loud enough for her to hear and as if addressing her. She glanced at the strange figure and saw him make a jaunty signal as he turned and climbed down the companion. She heard him utter a harsh cackle of derisive laughter, as if he had suddenly reached the source of some secret and obscene merriment.

James Wishart stepped back along the after deck and resumed his seat on the hatch.

"Who was that man?" Yolanda demanded in a low tone, still gazing at the hole down which Mr. Humphries had vanished.

"One of the engineers," replied James quietly. "He has been ashore on a spree. He's not himself."

"Not himself!" she echoed, raising her brows and then frowning upon the young man. "What had he to say to me? He shouted."

"No, he was speaking to me," said James. "I told him you had nothing to say to him, but he wouldn't take my word for it. He'll forget all about it by and bye."

"You gave him orders not to speak to me?" she asked, puzzled.

"Not exactly. He's my superior officer, you see, but I'll take care he does not embarrass you in any way." He looked up at her gravely.

"He thinks because I am alone on this ship——" she began.

"He hasn't the faintest notion whether you are alone or no,"

said James. "It's just his way. There's men who—I cannot explain it in so many words—men who do not respect a woman. I would say the second is confused in his mind about you. He has been somewhat unfortunate in his acquaintances."

She looked down at the young man, who made these hesitating explanations, in stupefaction. It was not that she did not understand English, but that the civilization out of which he was speaking was unknown to her. It was plain to her that James could not imagine her defending herself against men who might not, as he called it, respect her. She strove to penetrate his emotions when he spoke of that extraordinary apparition with the prominent black eyes and frowzy jaw being confused in his mind about her.

"I do not understand," she said suddenly, looking round in annoyance. The steward, Rafael Alvaraz, had come up the companion and was ringing a shrill cracked bell. "Holy saints!" she added, putting a hand to her ear. "Is this another of them?"

"Supper is on the table, that's all," smiled James, making to go forward.

"Do you not come with me?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, no," said James calmly. "It is not the custom on these ships. We have our own place. But——" he paused—"I shall be on deck afterward." And he gave her a quick glance.

She saw him walk away and turned upon the steward standing there by the skylight, holding the bell by its clapper and regarding her, his large womanish eyes suffused with grief-stricken adoration. To this fellow countryman of hers, Yolanda de Mara was more like a celestial visitation than a girl travelling to Costaragua. The ivory pallor of her skin and the hair coiled about her head, like a helmet of hammered bronze, held his delicate and sensual soul in a trance while he was moving noiselessly about his work in the cabin. She had entered the spare room while he was setting it in order that morning, her face showing above a black silk cloak with orange satin lining, and the careless glance of her eyes, the colour of yellow and brown seaweed seen through green water, had caused him to pause in his work and give way to a momentary faintness. He had swooned for a second, as it were, and awoke in a world in which this exquisite creature from the High Plateau dominated his soul. Now he muffled the bell at the first glance from those eyes and stood

there, like a penitent awaiting the word to descend into some solitary cell.

"Señorita," he breathed in soft Spanish, "the captain awaits you. Will you have the gracious condescension to . . . ?"

"You are not Cuban?" she remarked, pausing near him. Rafael lifted his eyes to her face as though expecting at that moment to expire in an ecstasy of unhappiness.

"No, Señorita. I am from the *tierra caliente,* near Rio Taga. Your pardon. . . ?"

"Nothing," said Yolanda shortly, and stepped into the shelter of the companion. As Rafael followed her she paused and said, gazing steadfastly at the shining brass stair treads of the curved stairway:

"How do I call you to my cabin?"

"I am close, Señorita, in the pantry or in the saloon. A knife on a water glass; two blows and I shall hear it." He made a gesture.

She went down at once, and found Captain Millerton at the table with Mr. Punshon, who had been enjoying the first dog watch, after a long day on his feet, reading Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Lady Rose's Daughter,* a book strangely suited to his taste. Mr. Punshon believed strongly in social strata. It took, he had found, all sorts to make a world: high and low, proud and humble, rich and poor. Jack had no right to be as good as his master. Mr. Punshon had once worked ashore in the United States, and democracy had not agreed with him at all. As he sat hunched over his mutton stew, his rotund back arched over his ruby-red face with the fleshy hooked nose and walrus moustache, his merry blue eyes fell upon the vision descending the curve of the companion, and he rose to his feet. Captain Millerton looked at his chief officer in surprise and followed his example slowly. He made a mental note to remind Punshon not to do it in future, and looked down his nose as Yolanda took her seat at the far end of the table.

There was something furtive about the captain's attitude toward the girl. He found it impossible to be at ease in the presence of a woman thus foisted upon him by what he called, to himself, "that smooth toff in Havana." He had been annoyed and flustered by Mr. Perkins's calm announcement. Mr. Perkins had business not yet completed. He would also visit Colon and come on by the local mail steamer. Miss de Mara was to proceed at once and be landed at Puerto Balboa. Cap-

tain Millerton disliked the tone in which Orlando Perkins had given those orders. He was a profoundly conventional Englishman, and the sight of Yolanda de Mara sitting opposite himself in his own cabin, in a way the owner's representative, gave the captain a disagreeable feeling very difficult for him to explain even to himself. While Mr. Perkins was standing on the poop watching the hatches being put on, the captain had scarcely noticed the girl. When he looked back from the bridge as the ship crept along the walls of the Morro and saw her sitting on the poop, his poop, his private quarters, he had a foreboding of trouble. It symbolized for him the change in the fortunes of the ship. He regretted that change now. Captain Millerton had reached an age when change irked him spiritually. Even the thought of what he was going to make out of that change did not reconcile him to seeing the girl on the ship. Women like that, he thought, glancing at her for a moment, mean trouble all the world over. He didn't understand men like Perkins, and wondered querulously how it happened those chaps got hold of money and power and—and women too, for that matter. They couldn't *earn* a living, the captain reflected, and stumbled unwittingly on one of those annoying fundamental facts of our life on earth. No, they couldn't earn it at so much a month, and yet he, a master mariner, was at that lahdidah johnny's beck and call. The night before he had seen a woman with Don Orlando—a woman of great beauty and dark vigour, from the opera house, and he had been upset.

He looked at Yolanda again. He had spent a number of years in Caracas and in the Canal Zone, and he was familiar with the strange and disconcerting beauty of Latin women of mixed blood. To tell the truth, the captain had had very little to do with them personally. His own wife never had any anxiety about her old Harry. During his early years his affairs had remained always merely occasional diversions when leisure and funds were available. He had never remembered the names or the faces of those girls in Caracas, Colon, and Panama City, supposing they had names, which was doubtful, and supposing their faces, under the carmine and rice powder, had not been all alike to him, ashore for a spree. Nowadays, of course, oh, no!

He looked at this girl again. A thought struggled to the surface of his mind and hung for a moment before slipping off into the void. That fellow with the monocle, the gloves, and the damn-you manner was perhaps sending her home to get her out

of the way. Had another string to his bow, obviously. Mr. Orlando Perkins had made no explanations, and the captain was so constituted in his mind that he never believed explanations, anyway. But fortified by this solution of the girl's position in the world, he favoured Yolanda with a longer glance and got one in return.

"Everything comfortable over there, Miss?" he said, nodding to the stateroom behind her. The *Candleshoe's* spare room was not often used except for stores and the captain's trunk, and it was an airless, smelly place. Rafael had cleaned it out and laid a strip of carpet between the wash stand and settee. He had also, unknown to the captain, found a pair of yellow curtains and hung them over the porthole facing forward.

"It is all right," said Yolanda, looking at the lamb stew which the steward was holding out for her, "for a day or two. I shall be glad to arrive in Balboa."

"Perhaps you're not a good sailor," remarked the captain as she shook her head at Rafael. "Don't feel seasick, do you?"

The steward proffered the girl some slabs of corned beef, and again she shook her head. They exchanged glances, and with an eloquent roll of his eyes Rafael moved softly into his little pantry.

"No, I am not seasick," replied Yolanda. "Why do you ask? The ship is not moving about at all."

"Well, seeing you had no appetite——" began the captain hurriedly and regretting at once his allusion to food as the girl eyed him calmly.

"I am hungry, but I cannot eat that," and she nodded toward the dishes between them. Her voice rang out clear and peremptory, and the lamp hanging over the table, moving slightly to the beat of the propeller, seemed to shake in response to that voice.

Captain Millerton made no reply. Mr. Punshon went on eating with excellent relish. He was too experienced to offer any comment on the situation. He himself had always kept a good table while in command, which would easily, in Captain Millerton's mind, account for his present condition. It had been the captain's intention, when the steward came in again, to order some special delicacy, tongue or chicken, for the passenger. He now raised his eyes and saw that this order had been anticipated. It occurred to him that if he left the matter where it stood he would be well out of a difficult situation. He wasn't running a liner. It would set a precedent for the ship if he gave an order.

He would let that dago steward use his discretion. And then, as he saw the way the man hung over the girl, setting things to her hand, it occurred to Captain Millerton, with a shock of surprise, that those two were compatriots. There was a tragic intensity in the steward's expression, the mark of an unhappy race, which was lost upon the captain. "Lot o' damn dagoes," was his way of putting it. It would have occasioned him the profoundest astonishment if anyone had suggested that those people had any significance in the world.

Still, the fellow was not to be blamed for giving a little extra attention to a girl who came from his part of the world. Rather a handful on a long voyage, that girl. Lucky it was only a forty-eight-hour run now. Nice to see her going ashore. Aha! Nice indeed, because they would then be at anchor in Puerto Balboa, and he would be able to get some information about his future movements.

That, really, was his difficulty at present. That toff with the monocle, Orlando Perkins, Esquire, the present owner of the *Candleshoe,* was not equipped to communicate clearly to a man like Captain Millerton. They had had a fruitless conversation ashore. When the captain had bluntly hinted that if things got their right names down there, he would himself be called a privateersman, Mr. Perkins had given him a cool stare and then, dropping his monocle had remarked that the captain could give himself any damn names that suited him so long as he continued to run the ship in accordance with the orders.

"There's something else besides completing that railway, that's what I think," Captain Millerton had muttered. "They don't start a revolution just because Gonzales and his family don't want a railway."

Mr. Perkins had given him an irritable stare before dropping the monocle, a trick which upset the captain more than he would have admitted.

"We aren't engaging you to think, Captain!" he remarked with great distinctness. "We really are not doing that. However, you are quite right. It isn't so simple as that. When you get to Balboa and the ship is under the Costaraguan flag, there's no knowing what you'll discover about Gonzales. But there's nothing you can do except take orders, I may tell you."

"Ah, that's what I thought," returned the captain. "If we start giving things their right names there's no knowing what might happen. I wasn't in the Venezuelan navy for nothing."

"So Harkelaw wrote me," said Perkins. "It decided me you were just the man for us. A man," continued Mr. Perkins, "who could keep his mouth shut when it was advisable. As for giving things their right names, you understand, first, last, and all the time, we are on the side of the government."

"That won't make me any less of a privateersman, though," returned the captain with relish.

"Well, you bloody fool, do you suppose we are engaging you as a Sunday-school superintendent?" Mr. Perkins had inquired in a shrill tenor, with a sudden feral dart of the head.

Captain Millerton had imagined not. He recalled the interview now and decided, looking across at Yolanda de Mara, that she knew something of the business. She had expressed no annoyance at being sent off, like baggage, in advance. She had expressed no emotions at all until she discovered she wasn't on an Atlantic liner as far as grub went. Now he was able to have a good look at her, Captain Millerton came to the conclusion she was rather more than Mr. Perkins' special concubine. Something in her air gave him the notion that she had brains as well as beauty. She seemed indeed to be pondering deeply some difficult problem, her left elbow on the table, her hand pressed to her cheek, while her eyes were bent upon the cup of strong tea which the steward had put down, as though she were reading the future in the dark depths of it.

No, it would not be as a Sunday-school superintendent, he reflected, and thinking of the men on the ship, he wondered whether he was in for any real difficulties owing to the change of flag. It would depend upon the black squad down below. He made a grimace when he thought of Mr. Barker. That grimace expressed his appreciation of the chief's antagonism to himself, but it also implied that he, Captain Millerton, was not averse to animosity in a general way; rather he preferred it in moderation, because friendship led to inconvenient slackness and expensive conviviality; but here was an occasion when it would be a distinct asset. With the second, of course, he would have trouble. Well! The captain grimaced again, and Yolanda de Mara, glancing up, thought he was smirking at her and stared in wonder at such insolence. But this was an error on her part. What had inspired the captain's change of feature was a sudden perception of his own power when the Costaraguan flag rose over the ship's poop. It was such a delightful thought, that he would be in a position to astonish that truculent Humphries, who had

been a source of annoyance ever since he and Barker had come on board the ship, that with characteristic caution Captain Millerton examined it narrowly. The more he did so the better he liked it. It would approximate the privateersman's authority over his ship, in fact, anyway, he thought, recalling the sudden revelation of humanity on the part of Mr. Perkins the other evening. Under his preoccupation with the petty decencies of life lay a thin stratum of hard, bitter avarice, but below that again was something combustible, which the mood of his employer had started to smoulder. Yolanda, sitting there, and glancing again involuntarily at the bearded face with the quick shifty eyes, was aware of a change beyond her native shrewdness, but clear to her feminine intuition. She was vaguely aware that he had come to some fresh view of the situation, and still more vaguely she groped for the reaction upon herself.

When Mr. Punshon, uttering no sound save a deep-toned "A-huhm!" to signify that he was about to retire, heaved up his rotund bulk and began sidling past her to get out from behind the table, like some cleverly trained and benevolent pachyderm, Yolanda waited until he was treading the deck overhead and then asked:

"Who is that man?"

"Chief officer, Mr. Punshon," said the captain, taking out a small penknife to sharpen a match for a toothpick. The steward refilled his cup with tea. Yolanda looked at him gravely. She seemed to be absorbed in the contemplation of the peculiar existence of men on a ship. She spoke in a low tone.

"He did not speak a single word. Is he afraid of you, the captain?"

This was a novel problem to Captain Millerton. He gave a short laugh and used the toothpick.

"And the young man I saw in the hotel—I cannot remember his name yet, he is of too low rank to come in this cabin?"

"Who's that? Ah!" Looking at the girl's beautiful face, alight with an almost transparent radiance, he saw a light on his own account. "That chap. I have to stop and think what his name is myself. Mr. Wishart."

"That is it." Yolanda smiled. "It is a very difficult name, I think."

"It's a Scotch name," said the captain, "but I wouldn't hold that against him. No, he isn't too low rank, as you call it, but just belongs to another department. Why?"

"He talks to me," she murmured. The captain, working his lips, gazed at her furtively.

"Oh, it's conversation you want, is it? Well," he rose, "call the steward if there's anything else, Miss. I'm going on the bridge."

Even the sudden noise of Mr. Harris descending the brass stair treads, up which the captain had just passed, did not rouse Yolanda from her profound study. Mr. Harris was startled, however. He had not hoped for this. He bolted into his cabin, which happened to be next to the spare stateroom, and came out, at once, his hair slicked back with a wet brush and with a clean collar on his bright red neck. Among the apprentices on the sailing ship on which he had learned navigation, seamanship, and various other arts not mentioned in his indenture papers, Mr. Harris had been known as Freddy Fewclothes, his widowed mother not comprehending rightly the amount of money a growing youth needed to sport a wardrobe. Once out of the "flaming wind bag," as she was picturesquely known to those who had to display their agility on her cold steel yards and break their nails on her enormous sails, Mr. Harris became a buck. The parsimony of his early years was responsible for his extravagant taste in waistcoats and ties when ashore. On the ship he was, however, in a condition of chronic dilapidation. His one suit of blue uniform had served him voyage after voyage, and he had no tropical clothing.

And yet, within this shabby scarecrow dwelt a fantastic ego oblivious of the shabbiness. Mr. Harris was never abashed in the presence of others, which perhaps was the most valuable remaining legacy from his sailing-ship days. His spirit had been not so much hardened as toughened and tanned like leather. While unmooring in Havana he had gotten himself into his usual troubles with his ropes, for he was one of those officers who never seem to get the knack of handling stern lines; yet all the while his concave face, with its sharp chin and crumpled bumpy forehead, was set in a grinning mask toward the girl who waved perfunctorily toward where the launch of Barinas Brothers was vanishing among the shipping. The captain, who never expected anything else but an inconvenient tangle from Mr. Harris, had not divined the immediate cause of it. Even he, had he been present on the poop instead of on the bridge, would have been astonished at the spectacle of that unlovely young man ogling the unconscious Yolanda. There is a stage below which, to

women of her type, a man does not exist as a possible male. Had she been in the mood and aware of him near her, she might have given him a friendly smile, as one pats a dog or strokes a cat who appears from under one's chair.

Now, as he took his seat at the table, Mr. Harris was so far from understanding his position in the world that he did not even know the girl had never before seen him. That she did not regard him as a desirable intimate friend did not enter his peculiarly shaped head. Mr. Harris as an actual ravisher of women had had only a moderate success, but in his private imaginings he had never known resistance.

Yolanda looked up. A strange-looking young man had taken his seat near her and was looking at her with a grin that revealed yellow teeth, several of which were broken. He was speaking to her. The steward came in to wait on Mr. Harris, and Yolanda addressed him in Spanish:

"Tell me, who is this?"

"Señorita," said Rafael, "it is one of the officers of the ship, but of no importance."

"Why does he look at me as if he were going to be sick?"

"Señorita, I do not know. He is of no importance."

"Oh, run away!" she returned, exasperated at the steward's hesitating choice of words. She did not know that he was endeavouring to avoid any phrases which Mr. Harris might chance to recognize.

"I beg pardon," that gentleman was saying now, "I thought you spoke English. You no sabe Inglez?"

Yolanda shook her head slightly. She discovered in her mind a sudden interest as to what this new arrival would do. He was disappointing. He shovelled stew on to his plate and, holding a slice of bread on his palm, spread butter while he focussed his characteristic grimace upon the food. It could never reach the girl's intelligence that Mr. Harris thought somewhat less of her now he believed she spoke no English, although he thought no less of himself because he understood almost no language save his own. She simply stared at him in uncomprehending curiosity. She saw him wave his hands and, with his mouth still busy with the food, utter incoherent sounds. He was engaged in this way when the steward returned.

"Ask him," she said rapidly, "what he wishes to say. He thinks I understand no English."

Rafael Alvarez looked sombrely at the young man consuming stew.

"The señorita ask what you want to say to her," he said.

Mr. Harris turned a face suffused with unintelligible emotions to the man in the white apron.

"Steward, tell her I'll see her ashore in Puerto Balboa, up at the Pension Francia, see."

Rafael Alvarez cast a gaze full of amazement upon the second mate of the *Candleshoe*. Mr. Harris made a gesture with his fork.

"Go ahead, steward. She doesn't bite, does she?"

The steward was not so sure. He looked apprehensively at Yolanda, who had heard the young man's words and who was now lighting a cigarette.

"Well!" she said in Spanish, rising and walking a couple of steps, so that Mr. Harris had to turn round to see her face. "Well, and what would you say about that, my friend?"

"Señorita, he does not understand," Rafael faltered. "These English sailors, they think—they believe . . ."

"You mean they are buzzards looking for carrion. Well, now, listen. Tell him that I will see him at the Pension Francia."

"Señorita, impossible!" the steward exclaimed. Mr. Harris, sensing an altercation, turned round in his swivel chair and regarded them with contempt.

"What's the matter with you, you damn dago?" he snarled. "Impossible! That's all my eye."

"Si, si! All right. Pension Francia," said Yolanda over her shoulder, and walked up the steps out of sight.

"Don't you try to interfere again," she heard Mr. Harris admonish the steward. "If you were a white man I'd be over the table at you. As it is, you don't know any better. Get me another cup of tea, and hurry, you . . ."

The emotions of Mr. Harris, when he had finished his supper and prepared to relieve Mr. Punshon on the bridge, underwent a series of violent changes. He reached the poop and paused before descending the short ladder to the after deck. It was dusk. The rapid tropical night was coming down. A sailor was coming aft with the stern lantern. The engine-room scuttle glowed with light reflected from the white-painted bulkheads. A flare-up as the cook flung scraps on the galley fire illuminated the deck and the underside of a lifeboat. Across the darkling water to the west lay a sullen band of orange and green. The

Candleshoe rose bodily upon the crest of a smooth unbroken undulation of the sea, a swell which was moving forward to explode in a never-ending roar of white combers upon the palm-fringed beaches of Costaragua. Mr. Harris was suffused with a glow of self-satisfaction as he slowly descended the poop ladder. At last he had achieved an authentic conquest. In spite of his jaunty front and truculent assumption of the irresistible charm of his personality, Mr. Harris had discovered a certain lack of refinement in the women with whom he had associated in the past. He suffered from an uneasy suspicion that he was not living up to the high ideals of his apprenticeship days. The sailors on that old sailing ship had told tales of rich and beautiful women who had resigned themselves joyfully to their tarry embraces. Such delights, Mr. Harris had been given to understand, were his in the future. He had sought them in many ports but without success. That particular combination of purity and passion which is the middle-class Englishman's conception of romance had eluded him. To have it suddenly held before his eyes in mid-ocean was intoxicating. Mr. Harris, as he ascended the bridge, was slightly affected by it as by a strong drink of spirits. Through the fumes of it he saw the gaunt weatherbeaten structure of the Pension Francia with its deep veranda facing the thunder of the surf on the rocks a hundred yards down the garden. He would not be in the bar downstairs this time watching a chance to slip away to the Cantina Sol or to the New Bristol House. He would be in one of the verandas with a bottle on the table, talking to this here señorita. He would be quite the toff. She looked like a hot one, and she had evidently fallen a victim to his virile personality. The rest of the crowd of the *Candleshoe* could do as they liked. He was for the beach in Puerto Balboa, to do things in style. Have to get a suit of white clothes, though. He recalled a remark of an old sailor whose story of his conquests had beguiled the night watches from Brisbane to Bremen. "Always wear a collar when you go ashore," said this roamer of the seven seas. "Women fancy a man who wears a collar. Take it from me."

It was the truth, Mr. Harris had discovered. He walked to the opposite end of the bridge. The old man was confabulating with that old mate. Mr. Harris suddenly felt disgusted with himself and his company. What a lot! he reflected sourly. Not a live one on the ship except that second engineer, and he was too much of a good thing altogether. Mr. Harris stopped short

of that degree of vitality which carried a fellow into the calabozo. That was now all finished. He himself would have a truly genteel affair on the veranda of the Pension Francia.

He heard the voices of those two old men, slightly raised. Mr. Punshon emitted a deep rumbling sound, and the captain said, "Well, soon's you see it, call me."

Setting his foot on the first step down the ladder the captain looked toward his second officer for a moment. Mr. Harris happened to catch that look on the wing and didn't like it. He didn't like Captain Millerton, come to that. No style. Gave no tone to the ship. Mr. Harris decided for the fiftieth time in his career that he was wasting himself in tramps. He would quit and go into the Western Ocean trade, where they carried half a dozen watch keepers and a fellow had some social position. Staring at the vast, flat oily swell of the Caribbean Mr. Harris became suddenly aware of a new idea. Gee whiz! Why hadn't he thought of it before? That piece in the cabin was rich, by the clothes she wore. Wouldn't it be a good plan to get married and settle in the country? These dagos were crazy about white men for husbands. Look how she took the first chance she got to meet him ashore. Some job bossing natives, lying in a hammock in the cool breeze all day. Horse to ride. Now he came to think of it, wasn't that better than walking the planks of a steamer's bridge all the days of his life? He'd be *somebody* . . . !

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Harris awoke from the dream of being somebody and answered Mr. Punshon respectfully. "Yes, sir!"

Mr. Punshon emitted a benevolent rumble to the effect that the current was adding a good five knots to the ship's speed, with the result that they would raise Cape Pinos before ten o'clock.

Mr. Harris was glad to hear it. He was thinking of when he would be in his bunk, exactly one inch of bulkhead separating him from that señorita. It struck him as a thought of singular beauty and delicacy. So near and yet so far!

Mr. Punshon went on to say that after passing Pinos the current set in under the land. The ship would have to keep outside the island of Santa Agata. Otherwise they'd be on the sand bar off the Corcubion River. The course at twelve midnight was to be shifted from south to south-southeast. Which would raise the Santa Agata light somewhere on the starboard bow, supposing they didn't see the rock before daylight.

Mr. Harris, gazing eastward where a vast efflorescence of pale rose marked the moonrise, decided that the mate was a bally old cuckoo. He renewed his resolve to get on a three-mate ship without delay. Here he was, an officer of the new school, and not a soul to talk to on the ship. Not one solitary congenial soul.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Harris. Mr. Punshon gave out a deep humming corresponding to "Well!" and prepared to go below. Mr. Harris wished he would. The young man wanted to think, not about Santa Agata but about the Señorita de Mara. Mr. Punshon, descending the ladder, gave a basso rendition of "Toll for the brave!" to the scandal of his relief, who had no knowledge of naval history and disliked the mate's old-fashioned informality. Having no dignity to speak of himself, Mr. Harris was scrupulous about the loss of it in others.

When Mr. Punshon had gone off like a booming insect into the luminous dusk, the night settled down upon the *Candleshoe* with her cargo of warring and discontented spirits. There was a hint of exasperation in the crash of the ash buckets against the shoot on the rail and in the rumbling mutter of hungry men. The watch below were grouped about the galley door. Their voices escaped from the skylight and mingled with the reverberant and muffled rumour of the engines. The cook, a shy and silent man, who was tired, suddenly shouted, and the unexpected quality of his retaliation struck the man dumb. Mr. Harris returned from a dream journey into the future and listened.

"Hullo," he muttered. "Trouble!"

The cook had yelled:

"Go to the old man, damn and blast you! Don't bully-rag me! I'm not making money out of men's bellies! Go to . . ."

Mr. Harris listened. Nice goings on, eh? He heard voices rumbling.

"Come on, let's go!—Who's goin' to tell him?—Not me!—I been logged before!—Fifteen days' pay."

"Ah!" said a slow, hoarse growl. "You'll participate in the profits, won't you, but you won't invest. Us do the dirty work and you'll eat the good grub when it comes."

It was the ship's lawyer announcing his leadership.

"We'll all go or nobody'll go." said another voice, drowned in the racket of a bucket in the ash hoist. A disgusted malcontent said: "Oh, what's the use?" and walked forward under the bridge. There was the slam of an iron door as the cook shut

himself in his galley bitterly conscious of the justice of the men's indignation.

"He's on the bridge!"

There was a hushed moment as they realized the old man might have heard them. Several forms appeared in the light of the chart-room lamp. Mr. Harris looked down at them.

"Captain up there, Mister Mate?"

"No, he isn't up here," said Mr. Harris. "What's the trouble now?"

"We want to see him about the grub. The meat's rotten, Mister. The stew smells something terrible."

"You can't bother him to-night," said the second mate shortly. "Go to the steward."

He began to walk to and fro again.

The men were nonplussed. Vaguely they knew the old man was dodging them. They had a suspicion the steward was carrying out orders. The lawyer spoke again.

"Ah—yes! The steward! Why not go to the fountainhead? What's the use of talking to these understrappers? Eh, boys?"

"Oh, dry up. Anybody'd think you were Jesus Christ, the long words you use!" said a new voice, bitter and contemptuous. Mr. Harris leaned over the bridge rail.

"Get forward, you men."

Nobody took any notice of him. Suddenly feet shuffled in the darkness.

"Here's the chief! Ask him. Leave him smell that stew. Here, Shorty, fetch the pan. Mister Chief, sir!"

Mr. Harris waited with bent head for Mr. Barker's comments upon the pan. The fireman called Shorty could be heard hurrying with the pan of stew. Mr. Barker spoke.

"Now, look'ee here, boys. It's not a damn bit o' use comin' to me with grub troubles. The old man finds the ship, and you'll have to see him. Yes, I know, I know. I say I can't do anything for you. It's the same both ends of the ship and the middle as well. See the captain."

"Mister Chief," came a slow, grave voice from beneath the bridge. "You know's well as anybody if a man don't get his food he can't keep steam."

It was a fireman, an experienced man, tall and gray, with fine features like an elder statesman.

"That's what you want to tell the captain," said Mr. Barker from along the deck. He seemed to be chuckling. There was a

light bantering tone in his voice which proved even more than his words whose side he was on in this struggle.

Mr. Harris pushed out his lower lip and reflected that the black squad would always side against the cabin. All the same, he was unable to dodge the sinister fact that this old man kept a rotten table. Always telling yarns about Scotch meanness! There wasn't a Scotsman alive who pinched a penny like Captain Millerton. Mr. Harris had seen him standing over that dago steward in the pantry, telling him how to save on the provisions. Fancy a skipper who made a fuss over the scraps, bacon rinds, and mutton dripping! Why, the ship was being run like a workhouse. The young man gazed into the warm darkness ahead, his thoughts returning to the girl in the cabin. Suppose, oh, suppose he was to slip his neck out of the collar and go free! He was too young to understand that ships are less jealous than women, that his bonds were very light, and that even Captain Millerton had his good points.

The contemplation of the peculiar world beneath which he lived and moved, like a maggot beneath the stones of monuments, in a congenial darkness of understanding, induced in Mr. Harris a certain tender melancholy. The men were gone forward again and the ash hoist no longer racketed and whined behind the wheel house. As he moved at intervals, treading the familiar gratings in his worn canvas shoes, the young man was startled to see a form at the farther ladder.

For a moment he wondered whether, in his abstraction, he had passed the figure in his walk without seeing it. The old man sometimes came quietly along in the small hours. Liked to know if his watch keeper was asleep. Came along, and if he heard the mate moving, went quietly away again. Once he had started up the ladder, and the creak of a loose tread had roused the dozing Mr. Harris and brought him into an attitude of erect vigilance. And the captain had gone along again. Mr. Harris had cultivated in sailing ships the gift of sleeping on his feet. You had to go right up and look at him to be certain he was not awake. And by then, of course, he was.

Now he remained quiet for a moment. If it was the old man it was better to take no notice until he came up. Mr. Harris turned away and scanned the dark western horizon where Cape Pinos would most likely be. Then he looked again across the faint glow from the wheel house and saw, with a slight shudder,

that the figure was now standing on the bridge leaning negligently on the back rail and looking straight ahead.

It was so unusual that Mr. Harris, with a glance at the shadowy form behind the wheel, a sort of disembodied intelligence communicating the will of the master to the mechanism beneath it, advanced to see who it was. He could not have been more surprised if he had beheld the devil.

"Hey, Mister," he whispered in shocked surprise at such unusual dereliction of duty. "Aren't you on watch?"

Mr. Humphries deliberately withdrew his gaze from the stars forward, and with folded arms drawn tight over his oil-stained singlet, his blue-dungaree legs draped easily sideways on the sacred white handrail of the *Candleshoe's* bridge, regarded the pop-eyed young man in front of him. He moved his head in the direction of the helmsman.

"Can he hear us?" he asked in a whisper.

Mr. Harris, among his other virtues, had acute hearing. He shook his head.

"Not if you don't talk too loud," he said.

"Well." Mr. Humphries' voice sank to almost nothing. His black remorseless eyes were like intense spots in the pallor of his face. He caressed his elbow with a ball of waste.

"Suppose the old man comes forward," muttered Mr. Harris, uneasily. "Is there anything the matter, Mister?"

"I won't hurt your bridge," returned Mr. Humphries, studying the second mate coolly. "You can wash it in the morning. Have you heard the news?"

"What news?" demanded the other gaping. A friend of his was on a ship with this new wireless telegraphy. Liners gave them the news from home. "Eh, what news?" The truculent concave features of Mr. Harris assumed an expression of distress at thought of news which he had not been the first to pick out of the air.

"We're going under the country flag," whispered Mr. Humphries. He thrust his chin out sideways and revealed to Mr. Harris the brilliant whites of his eyes. And all the while he seemed to be listening to the engines.

"Under the—wot? New articles, eh?"

"Go to the top of the class, Mister," came the low answer. Mr. Humphries sighed and slipped off the rail to whisper in the very convolutions of the second mate's red ear.

"Question is, do we sign 'em?"

In a flash the engineer had slid down the rail of the ladder and vanished into the darkness. Mr. Harris stood with his ear cocked as though entranced, as though Mr. Humphries were still pouring rich volumes of whispering sound into that wide portal to his confused intelligence.

The helmsman suddenly leaned over and struck the bell just outside the wheel house. Three double and one single stroke. Up on the forecastle head the lookout man followed suit, waking briskly from his torpor on the spare anchor. Mr. Harris jumped at the first clang, but he could not tear himself away from the lure of this extraordinary news. It was luck! He could walk out with a month's pay—nine pounds—and get a grand job ashore. Harbour master, eh? Of course, a fellow had to have a master's certificate for that. But, damn it all, there's no end of jobs in these dago places.

One bell! He wished the second had given him something more circumstantial and detailed. This was the result of being on a ship with a skipper and a mate like the inmates of an almshouse. Old and gray. Not one word had old Punshon said to him. Was it possible the old cuckoo didn't know about it? Strewth! Mr. Harris knew very little maritime law, but he did know that the articles of a ship's crew ended with a change of flag. And everybody knew wages on a country ship were double home-trade wages. He'd heard of fellows getting twenty pounds a month in second mate's berths. Ah, but he'd look round ashore first. There was that señorita to see at the Pension Francia.

Mr. Harris, getting his second wind and regretting that he was on watch until midnight, when Mr. Humphries would be asleep, began to wonder what it was all about. Who were the new owners? Or if Harkelaw, Govanlock & Co. kept her, who would manage her? Their port of registry would be Puerto Balboa, he mused. Only port in the republic. And what a port! A fellow would have to board at the Pension Francia, though.

But that didn't answer the second engineer's question. Would they sign the new articles? Mr. Harris never put the question directly to himself. What the other fellows did was the important thing. And what they did he would do.

It was a little before ten that he saw the light. The *Candleshoe* was going very fast to-night. The moon flooded the smooth barrelled contours of the sea. A faint wink on the horizon

made him send for the old man, reporting Cape Pinos. Captain Millerton, in his pajamas, was no more communicative than Mr. Punshon and much less genial. Captain Millerton didn't know how to be genial. He certainly had no intention of practising on Mr. Harris, whom he suspected of not knowing his business. He set the course, read the patent log and stood looking ahead for a few moments. Then he remarked in a low tone that the Santa Agata light, supposing they hadn't let it go out again, would be visible around two to half-past two. "Tell the mate to have me called at once," he added.

At midnight, when the burly somnolent form of Mr. Punshon loomed beside him and he hauled in the patent log once more, Mr. Harris debated within himself whether to speak to the old chap about this news or keep it to himself. What was the use? The old cuckoo would do whatever the skipper told him. Mr. Harris was faced with the fact that if he didn't stick by the ship he'd be going out with the engineers. There was no doubt in his mind they would never sign any coast articles under the Costaraguan flag. They'd be after shore jobs too. On the new railway. Oh, yes!

He said nothing. He stood for a moment beside the rotund bulk of the mate, quite unaware of the fact that Mr. Punshon had once been a slim young chap like himself, had run away from a ship in his time and gone fruit farming, and prospecting for gold up rivers Mr. Harris had never heard of. That great voice of his, a golden baritone, had echoed against their lofty shores. It had dominated drunken men in camps and startled native warriors by its likeness to a drum booming through the forests. Mr. Harris regarded his elderly superior officer, drinking hot tea out of a saucer, and slowly coming to life, with contempt. An old has-been, he thought; perhaps an old never-was. But he said nothing. He left Mr. Punshon to gaze steadily through his night glasses at the moon-flooded horizon that gleamed like a silver wire, and went below. It was Mr. Punshon who called his captain at three o'clock. Santa Agata, a high broken cone of black basalt, was visible far away on the beam.

"As usual," said Captain Millerton, as though he were glad to have his suspicions verified. "Can you see Strikers Cay?"

Mr. Punshon, his eye screwed into the end of the big telescope, gave a negative rumble.

The east was already paling. The moon, resting on the huge

masses of Sierra Nevada de Santa Agata, seemed to be larger than usual, blown taunt and spherical.

"Can you see it?" asked the captain, staring through his night glasses.

"No," said the mate, "but there's a ship coming out."

"What?" barked the captain. "Yes, there is. Now what's in the wind?"

"Coming straight for us," said the mate.

"I don't like it," said Captain Millerton, looking at his chief officer. "I didn't like it at the first." He took the telescope and steadied it against the awning stanchion. "It's the *guarda costa*. Lights out, and a *guarda costa* coming to board us. No lights on her either." He whistled softly. "Bear away," he called to the man at the wheel, swinging his arm slowly. "Due east."

They watched the *Candleshoe's* head swinging dark against the luminous eastern sky.

"They've altered their course," said Mr. Punshon.

"I dare say," said Captain Millerton. They can tell their story outside territorial waters."

PART TWO

CHAPTER I

THE Pension Francia was like Señora Munn, who owned it. It was elderly, dusty, weather beaten, and a little better than it looked. It had seen better days. It was in Puerto Balboa but not of it. It had a distant foreign air, standing gray and lifeless in the morning sun against the background of cactus and palm and bamboo. It startled the stranger, wending his way past the desultory clamour of the railroad shops behind the Aduana, seeking a breeze under the coconut palms of the beach, to behold that high gray spinsterish edifice on his left. It was composed of a central building of classical outline with wings forming obtuse angles with it. The prevailing breeze from the east rushed into the arms of the building, as it were, and swirled the dry dust of the courtyard into the most distant bedchamber. There was about it a faint but alarming suggestion of a prison. The gray jalousies, closed against the implacable glare of the morning sun, made it look impregnable and sinister. And there was a hint of remorseless retribution in the gate which guarded Señora Munn's office in the central block. It was of heavy iron bars, suitable for withstanding the assault of infuriated mobs, or for securing large and carnivorous animals. A huge padlock dangled from one of the knobs. Its key was immovable in the wards with the salt rust of the tropics. A stranger, leaving his dingy carriage in the courtyard among the palms and wild-rubber trees, where large cages full of outlandish birds squabbled and squawked like maniacs over rotten fruit, and after passing the circular basin of coralline rock in the centre where reposed an apparently lifeless alligator, would have the illusion of entering a shabby zoölogical garden. The grim grating of the office entrance might easily have been the abode of a lion or a tiger. He would peer into the cool darkness of the place, which was a couple of steps below the ground level, and he would see Señora Munn at a yellow roll-top desk with gaping seams and surmounted by ancient box files and an enormous tarantula in a jar of alcohol. It was, if he only knew it, a much rarer exhibit than either lion

or tiger, and, if he were not respectable, a much more dangerous creature. Señora Munn might be said to exist spiritually upon dismembered reputations. Into that office at some time or other came every resident foreigner in Costaragua. They would leave a fragment of some reputation for Señora Munn's nourishment. To the intelligent there was a symbolical significance in that awful thing in the glass jar. Without disrespect, Señora Munn in the Pension Francia was something like the tarantula in the alcohol. She was miraculously preserved from decay by the master illusion of her life. Everybody in Costaragua had heard of Señora Munn's grand passion. To know of it was an unofficial passport to the unofficial history of the republic. Mr. Reid B. Claxon, representing the Hispaniola Syndicate, of Nassau Street, New York City, was not the man to be uninformed upon such a theme. Mr. Claxon made it his business to have a maximum of information about everybody he came in contact with.

Señora Munn, seated in her great mahogany chair, a locally made masterpiece which made the dried and splitting roll-top desk seem even more flimsy, went on revealing to Mr. Claxon the past and present history of Costaragua. She knew it all, from the day she had arrived, without ever having dreamed of coming to the country at all, down to the last rumour brought from San Benito on the high plateau, from San Paulo on the river, the gossip of the latest-arrived *buque costerno* from Rio Taga, or the home news by the captain of the steamer *Santa Brigida,* just in from Colon.

In his own smooth easy jargon Mr. Claxon was a "representative of financial interests," an American who knew nothing of England. To him she seemed fabulous except in the one fabulous feature of her strange career. That great passion of Señora Munn for the founder of her fortunes, for him who had by accident planted her in Puerto Balboa and established her in her peculiar but unshakable social position, was comprehended but not shared by Mr. Reid Claxon. So far from establishing Reid B. Claxon in business in Costaragua, the great Francis Striker, head of the Striker-Perkins Syndicate, had sent out an under secretary to tell Mr. Claxon "nothing to-day thank you," as though he had been a drummer selling a patent excavator. A flat failure it had been, that breezy visit to the great gloomy-looking offices of the Striker-Perkins Company on the Calle Miranda. But Mr. Claxon was not going back to New York yet. He was "looking over the field," to use another of his felicitous locutions.

He was a big burly person, and he filled compactly the bent-wood armchair near the desk. With a tendency to sprawl, he compromised by nursing one leg and getting as deeply into the chair as possible. Mr. Claxon was a psychologist. It seemed to him, from experience, that the best way to get the minds of people to relax was to relax his own body. If he sat taut and ready to go they did not tend to become discursive.

Señora Munn was a psychologist also, but in another direction, as became an English widow who kept a hotel in the American tropics, a hotel of the most rigorous respectability, where native gentlemen were made conscious of a certain coldness if unaccompanied by their wives and daughters. Señora Munn, who had been cast upon the resounding surf-beaten shore of Costaragua at the period of her greatest bereavement, had carried unimpaired through the years a suspicion that no Latin-American man had any honourable intentions whatever. She had confided to many of her trusted friends that she had a revolver under her pillow every night.

She possessed, in a full and abounding measure, that peculiar English middle-class faculty of astringent reserve. She had a habit of dressing in starched dresses. They hung rigidly upon her unappetizing form like festoons of drapery upon a framework of sharp thin deals. They gave her head, carried high upon a slightly withered neck, the appearance of a virginal automaton.

She sat sideways at her roll-top desk, one arm lying along the faded green blotter, and remaining perfectly motionless, save for her lips, looked past Mr. Reid B. Claxon at the hot dusty sunshine of the courtyard. A servant was out there sprinkling water upon the dust. The pipe in the centre of the alligator's pool was throwing up a feeble column of water. The servant was filling a little pannikin and walking about flicking drops on the dry white dust of the paths. It is characteristic of the Costaraguan natives that they perform such duties with an air of dispirited wonderment, as though they had exhausted their vitality in trying to comprehend the mysteries of the Anglo-Saxon character. Señora Munn had a great many servants and not one of them ever carried out her orders. When she spoke "severely" to them they listened in an attitude of gentle idiocy, their brilliant eyes and teeth gleaming faintly in an inane smile. But they did not carry out the orders.

Reid B. Claxon, representing the Hispaniola Syndicate, was

waiting for a cable from New York to his report that Striker-Perkins interests were not to be reached regarding the Las Esmeraldas Concession. He listened to Señora Munn with the most deferential attention. He was not uninteresting to women. He was a widower and fond of feminine society. He liked to be regarded as a reliable friend. He made no pretense to be a saint, it was to be understood. He had enjoyed himself in San Benito. But he was looking, in a vague way, for something or somebody. Perhaps his pilgrimages through the cities were inspired by this vague ideal. He felt there was something in him not appreciated by his business associates and their wives at home. He hardly knew what he wanted. He could not define it. He merely waited, looking round.

But he had become informed as to the position of Señora Munn in the country and he could see that the cultivation of this old-fashioned-looking creature, with her moustache and slow opaque gaze, was worth a little time and trouble.

"And you mean to say you were really going to Chile at the time?" said Mr. Claxon admiringly.

"To join my husband," said Señora Munn. "Mr. Munn had a splendid position in the bank there. It was arranged, as soon as he had a home ready, that I should join him. I was not happy in my parents' home in Brondesbury, being married, you see."

"I should say I do see, Señora, and I don't know how you stood it," stated Mr. Reid B. Claxon in an emphatic tone. He gazed at her, half in amazement at her heroism in coming to Costaragua when she had been bound for Chile and half in sympathy for a misunderstood young woman in an uncongenial atmosphere.

"And of course it was a great shock, on arriving in Panama, to hear the news of my husband's death."

Mr. Claxon made a sound with his lips that signified the most horrified assent. Señora Munn looked down at the starched folds of her dress beneath which her white cotton stockings hung loosely on her ankles. She touched lightly the heavy roll of hair on her neck.

"Why, it's a wonder it didn't bowl you over, Señora. If you hadn't had what I call the most wonderful stamina, it would. Ninety-nine ladies out of a hundred," went on Mr. Claxon, pausing as though rapidly reviewing the chorus of a hundred possible widows, "would have been absolutely prostrated."

Mr. Claxon looked very severely at Señora Munn, as though he suspected her of wanting to question his figures. He added firmly: "Ninety-nine out of a hundred."

Señora Munn smiled in modest acceptance of the compliment.

"Really, I had to bear up. And as it happened all was for the best. Of course, being an Englishwoman abroad without friends or prospects, what could I expect? But Mr. Striker wouldn't hear of my going back."

"What, the Mr. Striker up in San Benito?"

Señora Munn inclined her head. What other Striker could there be besides the personage to whom she was bound by ties of enduring reverence and delicate sentiment? Mr. Claxon's jaw was sagging. He could see the old frump was hinting at something, but he couldn't see into her mind as yet.

"Oh, I see," he said, although he didn't. "You were fellow passengers so to speak.

"After Colon," corrected Señora Munn. "Hearing of my bereavement in Colon and observing my desperate position, for I assure you a young lady going to join her husband doesn't usually have any large sums with her, Mr. Striker made the suggestion that I come on here and assist him in the development of the country."

Mr. Reid B. Claxon gazed at Señora Munn with wholehearted enthusiasm. With a curious blend of conscious bravado and instinctive shrewdness, he had recognized a sister practitioner. Mr. Claxon did not yet appreciate the whole significance of Francis Striker's personality in Costaraguan affairs, but he was able to perceive the artistry of Señora Munn's description. He himself could not have elaborated a fact into a grotesque truth with a more subtle phrase.

"And you certainly have developed it, Señora," he murmured, gazing out at the dust of the courtyard, at the blazing blue of the sky, against which a dead and decapitated palm tree stood out like a drunken Egyptian obelisk. The alligator, roused by the gardener, was trying to clamber over the edge of the basin, his crouching posture and furtive glance confirming Mr. Claxon's dislike of his shabby and dirty body.

"You certainly have developed it. Wonderful country, Señora."

"It was very difficult at first," she remarked. "This hotel was built afterward. I had a small place where the Custom House is now. The servants were not trained . . ."

Mr. Claxon, wondering how any servants could be less trained than those he had seen in the Pension, looked at Señora Munn and nodded sympathetically.

"It's one of the most remarkable and romantic stories I've ever heard, Señora," he said. "And you know I was in San Domingo. Yes, I've been about quite a lot down here. I was down there looking over the field for an investment house. I found myself in the thick of it. A revolution, no less, Señora. But I'm a business man, you see, not a soldier. Yet, all the same, I was nearly run up against a wall and shot, Señora."

Mr. Claxon watched the gardener pushing the alligator back into the basin with a hoe. He did not explain the unfortunate misunderstanding which had got him in such a fix in San Domingo. How was he to know that colonel had a prior claim on that little octaroon at Macoris? Señora Munn would not relish such an anecdote. It would be indelicate. He himself regretted it extremely. He always regretted such adventures. They were failures in his search for that vague yet pure ideal. He studied Señora Munn until her dead black eyes moved round and rested their scrutiny upon the small eyes of Mr. Claxon—eyes which seemed to be behind his big mouth because of his habit of throwing his head far back as he talked. She looked at him for perhaps a fraction of a second before she simpered.

"Oh, romantic! Well, of course, it's quite confidential, but there has never been anything between us but the greatest mutual respect. It's difficult to be romantic—here."

"And you'll not misunderstand me, Señora, when I say I'm mighty glad to hear it," declared Mr. Claxon, with a sort of subdued yet thunderous approbation. The dark lifeless texture of Señora Munn's cheeks deepened in colour. Her opinion of Mr. Claxon rose at the subtle flattery implicit in his reply. There had been a time when Señora Munn, flushed with half a bottle of her own best port wine, had been coyly complacent when intimate friends charged her glowingly with controlling the destiny of a certain concessionaire. It was then that the portrait of Señor Don Francisco Striker, painted by a young artist of San Benito, had been purchased boldly by Señora Munn and boldly hung in the private dining room upstairs. But now, listening to the honeyed words of Mr. Claxon, she felt that she had taken the right course. Gentlemen with business connections in the States would not misunderstand her sentiments.

"Mr. Striker felt that the first need of Puerto Balboa was a

respectable hotel for the railway staff. Of course you must remember there was no town here at all then, practically."

Mr. Claxon gave a sympathetic glance through the doorway. If he had confided his own private thoughts to Señora Munn he would have told her that there was precious little town there at that very moment. But Mr. Claxon rarely revealed his private thoughts. He kept them private. He had for purposes of conversation a large assortment of optimistic and laudatory comments. He found that they were accepted at their face value in every country which he visited. He had been singularly successful in making a living out of the sentiments. Only occasionally was he the victim of a setback, when some difficult person, like Mr. Striker in San Benito, declined to listen.

"Why, Señora, if you'll excuse the way it's put, I'd say you were one of the mothers of this wonderful country."

"You flatter me," she said, without taking offence.

"Not at all, Señora. If you'll change the word to admire, then I agree with you. To stay here and help build up the place, when all the while you'd rather have gone back home, I call it a remarkable and unusual achievement. In such a short time too."

"Fifteen years is a very long time, in a way," Mrs. Munn remarked, and Mr. Reid B. Claxon reflected that fifteen years was a very long time in every way to spend in Costaragua. Mr. Claxon, though he did not know it, belonged to a large and flourishing community of Anglo-Saxons. Clean up and clear out is their watchword. Mr. Claxon, as soon as he could clean up, intended to clear out. Blended with his other feelings was a genuine wonder at any "white man" or woman staying in such a God-forsaken hole as Costaragua.

"Fifteen years, eh?" This was really what he wanted to know. Fifteen years! It gave him the measure of what he himself had to contend with. His firm wanted him to look up water-power concessions, mining concessions, transportation concessions. But what was the use of trying to do anything when everyone he interviewed said he'd have to see Francis Striker, and when he tried to see Francis Striker all he got was a message through a clerk. Busy! The man seemed to have them all buffaloed. Even this old girl, with her dingy fly-blown hotel, was crazy about him. Anybody would think the man was a sort of sacred bull.

He was looking at Señora Munn as though she were part of

the field which he had come down to look over. In fact, he was wondering whether it would not be worth while to plant a few seeds in this part of the field. He was in low water because, so far, he had had no encouraging news to send to New York, and until he got home he would have only very moderate expenses allowed him. Travelling in this country, he found, was dear as well as uncomfortable. The Pension Francia was dear, come to that.

He was looking at her because it was dawning on him that so far as he himself was concerned she might prove very profitable indeed. He might get a personal private interview with the great Francis Striker, if he played his cards deftly and boldly. The directors of the Hispaniola Syndicate, on the fifteenth floor of the Lockwood Building on Nassau Street, were speculatively interested in Central American securities. They held, under various names, a million pesos' worth of Costaraguan Sevens. These were not an attractive investment for the general public, who were vague as to the locality of Costaragua and imagined that the Costaraguans spent their brief and useless lives shooting one another in revolutionary wars. But the Hispaniola Syndicate was aware that the Striker-Perkins Company would eventually get their railroad built up to San Benito. They were aware that the railway was already open beyond San Paulo, the coffee centre, three thousand feet above the sea. They had a hint that the English combine under Sir Montague Mulholland was already in the southeasterly section of the country, where Sir Montague himself had travelled. At a certain dinner given by the Scissors Makers Company, one of the London Guilds, some years before, Sir Montague had incautiously remarked that the rubber resources of Costaragua might be conservatively estimated at a hundred million trees, while the hot lands between the Rio Taga and the Central Cordillera would afford acreage for a hundred million more. The Hispaniola had this post-prandial comment, forgotten by nearly everybody, marked for attention. They also owned a concession for mining platinum in the southeastern section of Las Esmeraldas, granted under the old Constitution of 1865 and under consideration for renewal in the courts at San Benito. In the files of the Syndicate in the Lockwood Building was a batch of correspondence with the United States Consul at Puerto Balboa, who had been approached for data concerning commercial facilities. The information this gentleman afforded the Hispaniola Syndicate was meagre in the

extreme, which need not have surprised the Syndicate because Mr. C. H. B. Leake, the consul in question, was an Englishman and represented a number of high-class English manufacturers himself.

Mr. Claxon, whose business in life was to look over fields with an optimistic eye, was now on the ground in person. It is a feature of such organizations as the Hispaniola Syndicate that they are willing to pay a cash price for optimism. It was Mr. Claxon's stock-in-trade. He was at times during his career a composer of prospectuses full of grave, weighty, and sonorous phrases. They conveyed with a sort of elephantine playfulness the profound optimism of the writer concerning the future of the company whose capital stock he was promoting. It is a common mistake to imagine that this sort of thing is aimed exclusively at the gullible public, the widow, and the spinster in small places. Mr. Claxon could have explained that business men, like those in the Hispaniola Syndicate, were hungry for it. It was often merely whistling to keep their courage up, but they did not call it that. They called it establishing a basis for future good-will. Good-will has a market value. Mr. Claxon was at work all the time, in his own way, in the creation of good-will. Some people never speak ill of the dead. Mr. Claxon never spoke ill of the living and did not mention the dead at all.

These remarks will explain why Mr. Claxon continued to study Señora Munn while that lady busied herself with her accounts. He was like a general who had been temporarily repulsed from his main objective and who suddenly perceives that a small position close to him may be the key to the whole campaign. Mr. Claxon was not a soldier but, as he modestly described it, "a business man." Perhaps, after all, he did regard himself as a soldier of fortune. He used many military expressions. He alluded to "campaigns" and "the field," to himself as a pioneer in front of the massed troops of civilization, and such high-sounding phrases. And he had one weakness found in all ranks of an army: he was susceptible to female charms.

Not those of the señora, however. The fascination she was at present exercising upon him was not that of Circe but of Penelope. She was enthralling him by weaving an intricate web of Costaraguan history. She was making out the weekly bills for the guests of the hotel, and as each one was completed she would pause and tell a little more of her story.

"Excuse me, Señora, but do I understand that this Señor

Perkins is the son of Orlando Perkins who used to own the Las Esmeraldas Concession?"

"Adopted. Señor Perkins had only daughters. This present Don Orlando was a godson, whose father, the Honourable John Pangbourne, was an early friend. They were with Venancio Flores in Montevideo and became very rich. Then they came to Costaragua. Señor Pangbourne was killed in a duel, they say. The son is the present Don Orlando. He took his godfather's name and inherited the estates. But he is very rarely at Santa Clara. Don Orlando is in the senate, and his business interests take up most of his time. Of course, the Las Esmeraldas Concession that you speak of was sold by young Don Orlando."

"And when will he be here, if I may go so far, Señora?"

"He is expected. He is bringing his fiancée Señorita Yolanda de Mara. She has been in New York. They stay here, of course."

Mr. Claxon wondered what a young lady who probably put up at the Brevoort or the Astor thought of Señora Munn's slovenly establishment. But he felt somehow that all this about the Perkins family was important to himself. He lay back and looked down his nose.

"She's a very beautiful girl, I suppose." Mr. Claxon had the American business man's abstract passion for female beauty as well as his own educated connoisseurship of certain types. Señora Munn smiled enigmatically.

"Señora Yolanda de Mara has a very strong character," she remarked. "She is of mixed descent, they say. She also was the ward of Don Orlando the elder. Young Orlando inherited the wardship in a way. She was only a tiny child and he had her educated at a convent. Yes, she is beautiful. He is a very high-spirited man. He is one of the most important *politicos* in the country. He could marry—oh, any girl he pleased in San Benito. It's a pity in a way."

"Rich, of course," said Mr. Claxon with an inaudible sigh. "I suppose this Striker-Perkins outfit is the biggest in the country. You'll excuse me exhibiting my ignorance, Señora, but it didn't occur to me there was any other Perkins, you see, but the old gentleman who died some time ago."

"Before our times," she informed him gravely. "It was Mr. Striker who saw the value of the concession if properly admin-

istered and bought it out. Young Orlando was only about eighteen and very high-spirited."

He shook his head and looked grave.

"Pity," he said, and pursed his lips. He felt somewhat discouraged, in spite of his professional optimism. It looked to him very much as though the Hispaniola Syndicate owned merely the husks and parings of Costaraguan prospects. This Striker-Perkins outfit had the bally country sewed up in their shirts.

"Seeing you've mentioned the family as the original owners of Las Esmeraldas," he went on, "I wonder if it would be any use my sticking round until this Mr. Perkins arrives. Think you could get me an introduction, Señora?"

"It's possible, of course," she said, compressing her lips, "but I couldn't promise. It's very different here." Señora Munn levelled her lustreless black eyes upon the recumbent Mr. Claxon. He suddenly put down his feet and rose. He tightened his belt and then leaned with both hands on the desk so that his head, sunk between his burly shoulders, came near the señora's head, which was encircled by many serpentine coils of dead black hair, as though she were a mild kind of Medusa, whose glance could harden a man's thoughts into resolutions.

"Señora," said Mr. Claxon, in a low, carefully modulated tone, yet swiftly spoken for all that, "Señora, this is a wonderful opportunity for you to put me next the very men who can put through an important transaction for the benefit of the country. I'm frank to say that, what with one thing and another, I didn't get an opportunity to lay the matter before Mr. Striker personally in San Benito. One time when I was at liberty, he was engaged. Another day, when he had the time I had an important engagement with the American Minister. Now Mr. Perkins would grasp the proposition in two-twos. Suppose I stay on in your hotel a week or two."

Señora Munn did not lose sight of the basic fact that Mr. Claxon had very little choice between staying at her hotel until the local mail steamer from Colon touched at Puerto Balboa, and going into the interior again. But the easy magnetism of Mr. Claxon's address made her scalp tingle pleasantly. Señora Munn was forty. She was outwardly austere toward all and especially to those she disliked. She was absorbed in saving money. But within the starched white bosom and behind the lustreless black eyes she was a forlorn exile hungry for the flattery and attention of men. She had never had them, and now she

involuntarily stiffened at their approach. She glanced up at the man looking down at her with his prominent, non-revealing gray eyes. She was afraid. She did not know, on the spur of the moment, what to do. She tapped the desk with her pencil. She tried to think of something to say that would convey to him delicately her awareness of his motives. She trembled slightly and looked down again at the desk. Mr. Claxon, not comprehending, smiled and leaned a little farther over. He wondered if she knew something about Don Orlando's movements and had suddenly decided to say nothing. Señora Munn was appalled by the discomfort she was experiencing at having a strange man so close. She did not like it. Or did she? She trembled again, not knowing what to do or say. Suppose he did stay in her hotel. To have him standing there so close terrified her. All these years, since Mr. Munn had left England immediately after a brief and not very satisfactory honeymoon, she had never had a man's breath so close to her face. She made marks on the blotter which Mr. Claxon, with bent meditative head, followed respectfully. She felt him there. She heard the scratch of his fingers on the bristle of his chin. She saw out of the corner of her eye the big hand, with broad flat nails, on the desk. She trembled again at the possibilities of this man's penetrating her secret thoughts and laying siege to her in some moment of weakness.

"Of course, you'll please yourself," she murmured almost inaudibly.

Mr. Claxon, stroking his chin thought, "The damned old nanny! She's remembered something and got scared." Aloud he said pleasantly:

"It sure is a comfortable place, Señora. Well, it just struck me, you mentioning the family, it might be possible to get an introduction. Perhaps there'll be an opportunity later on. Never know what's going to happen. There'll be a cable from the office to-morrow. Tell you what, Señora, I'd like a game of cards now and again."

The night before, going down in his pajamas to get a drink of water from the cooler, Mr. Claxon had seen Señora Munn and Mr. Leake, the Consul, seated in the señora's private parlour playing Whist. "We might have a party," he had thought.

Señora Munn suddenly looked up and looked dignified.

"Very pleased, I'm sure," she said with a prim smile. Mr. Claxon thought of his future social activities without delight. He played cards mostly on boats and trains.

"Well, I'm interrupting your work," he said. "I've a few letters to get off myself."

Mr. Claxon went slowly and powerfully across the courtyard and gave the costeno native, who was flipping water from a basin upon the lime-kiln dust of the path, the glance of a healthy contemptuous Anglo-Saxon. But when he reached his dusty bare room, it was not to write letters. He took off his clothes, adjusted the shutters to keep out the painful glitter of the afternoon sun on the sea beyond the palms, and looked about him.

The room looked as if it had been the abode of a demented and destructive Victorian celibate. An impalpable fine limestone dust, from the road, that ran through the railway property, lay upon the surfaces of the washstand and of the desk table whose maroon leather top was ravaged by the heat of the coast. It lay on the shelves of the tall wardrobe whose doors hung open like a shabby old frock coat. On the varnished match-board wall hung a calendar two years old with a picture of skating on a pond in the English countryside. A gigantic roach suddenly bolted from behind the soap dish, dropped to the floor and vanished under the bed. The bed was not at all to Mr. Claxon's taste. It consisted of a mattress of sailcloth stretched taut, a couple of sheets and a mosquito bar of heavy muslin containing several holes. He was a martyr to the bites of insects. On Mr. Claxon they raised red angry disks which remained for weeks.

He sat down in the creaking rocking chair beside his leather trunk and raised the top. In the tray, among a welter of shirts and underwear, he rummaged for a moment and drew out a can of insect liquid and a small spray pump.

Mr. Claxon considered himself an enlightened American. He would have smiled at anyone who believed in fables. But he had a perfect faith in labels. Up to his arrival in Costaragua he believed implicitly in the label on the can. Absolutely certain death of all insects. Several of them were shown expiring, legs in air, on the label. But none of them were anything like the size of that thing under the bed. He knew, from his experience up at the Hotel Bolívar at San Benito, that the dilapidated wardrobe contained several more. If he sprayed them they would come out and rush at him, for all he knew. But he wanted to lie down on the bed, and so, putting some of the stuff in the reservoir, he pulled out the bed and began to look for the roach. It had struck him early in his trip that the insects of Costaragua

were much cleverer, quicker, and more efficient than the native humanity of that republic.

It was very hot in the room. It was the afternoon hour before the breeze began to come in off the sea. Presently it would be cool on the veranda outside and the mosquitoes would be biting like demons. He would have to lie under the mosquito bar and wipe his face and neck with a dusty towel. In the dining room the flies bothered him. They fell into the melted canned butter and drowned in the condensed milk. The infernal country was bursting with produce and Señor Munn's hotel had nothing to eat save what came from England or North America. Millions of head of cattle and neither butter, cheese, nor milk, nor beef either, down here! Fruit, fruit, fruit! Stewed goat and fried plantains. Black beans and then more fruit. English tart like a slab of gray sealing-wax with a dab of tough toothaching jam out of a tin. He would have given five dollars for a thick steak overhanging his plate, with onions and French fried potatoes, topped off with a cup of home coffee and a wedge of apple pie and ice cream.

When the roach was driven out and dispatched with a copy of *El Mundo,* which he had bought while in the capitol, he lay down on the bed and, from mere habit, opened the paper again. Mr. Claxon could "find his way round," as he put it, in colloquial phrase-book Spanish, but he read it with difficulty. The words "Don Orlando Perkins" caught his eye near the top of the editorial. *El Mundo* was the conservative daily paper. It was the vocal organ of the Agrarian party. Mr. Claxon wrinkled his brows over the article. It was obvious that it was an attack upon Don Orlando. There was reference to his absence in North America, but the general drift eluded him.

He fixed his eyes on the English calendar and began to reflect upon the situation. It was against his optimistic character to brood upon the future. He rarely felt despondent for long. Something or somebody usually came along and saved the situation.

But as he lay on his bed in the Pension Francia he was confronting the fact that so far he had done precious little in Costaragua to earn the praise of the Hispaniola Syndicate. He had been unable to persuade them that he ought to have a salary as well as expenses and commission. Even the commission was contingent upon his success within a certain time. What he was specifically sent down to do was to sell the Las Esmeraldas

Concession to the Striker-Perkins Company, or, if possible, exchange it for an interest in the San Benito line. It was known in Nassau Street that Striker-Perkins were often hard up for ready money. Their last flotation of bonds in London had been withdrawn. It was a failure. Neither the bankers nor the public gave any heed to the predictions of hired experts that the railway from the coast would open up enormous areas of rich country. All English eyes just then were on South Africa. All American eyes were on the southwest. All Dutch eyes were on oil and rubber. Germans gazed with intense interest upon the Cameroons, and the French were absorbed in North Africa. The Costaraguan Railway Company's proposed issue of Gold Bonds did not proceed to allotment. Nassau Street, with some money to spend, was spying out the land. Mr. Claxon's instructions to "look over the field" applied to the developments made possible by the line already opened up to San Paulo. But in the first place an impression must be made upon Striker-Perkins. They were to be impressed with the value of Las Esmeraldas. They were to be informed, indirectly, that large interests with ample capital were behind the Hispaniola Syndicate. Letters from widows and spinsters in various parts of the United States came to the Striker-Perkins office asking for advice because they had been urged to buy stock in the Central Costaraguan Railway. A cable from the Hispaniola Syndicate asked for a quotation on C. C. R. Preferred because the Syndicate held orders to buy.

But so far, in spite of all this elaborate preliminary labour the results had been invisible. There was, to Mr. Claxon, something horribly inhuman in a man who ignored a complete heavenly city of painted cloth. A man at the hotel in San Benito, whose mahogany-coloured face marked him as fresh from the bush, had had a long tale to tell. He had been surveying and he had quit. He had a number of original and uncomplimentary names for the Striker-Perkins outfit. He was going home, to God's country, and Striker-Perkins could go to hell and the high ranges. Mr. Claxon had cultivated Harvey Hannerson. They had spent the evening together more than once. As they sat drinking in a shabby little dive with a marimba banging away near them, Harvey Hannerson began to tell of a trip he had made "across the river." He had been prospecting in Las Esmeraldas. His great scorched face had borne an expression of tragic bitterness and alcoholic remorse as he tremblingly

fashioned another cigarette, spilling the dusty tobacco into his whisky. Mr. Claxon had led him on with profound attention and had kept his glass full. And if what that forlorn and dissipated waster had said were true, it would be of immense importance to Nassau Street. But was it true? And how could one get at the truth of such a statement?

His tale was that once, some years back—he was not clear as to that detail even—he was having his usual spree in San Benito on leave, and one morning a young caballero had come into his room at the hotel and had offered him a job. He was to go down to Cordoba, and a man there would give him instructions and an outfit of mules, mozos, and all he needed. It was good money for a few days in the bush. It took him away from the booze, as well. He had gone down, and the fellow who owned the posada, which he had bought with money won in a Panama lottery, fixed him up. This guy was only agent for some big squeeze in the government, Harvey believed. Anyhow, he got a map of the Las Esmeraldas Concession on the southern bank of the Colorado River and at certain places marked in red ink he was to make careful examination of the ore.

Mr. Claxon did not get that story without a lot of circuitous conversation. Harvey Hannerson was extremely hazy about Mr. Claxon's business in San Benito. He had a dim notion that from what he said Mr. Claxon was trying to sell something to the Central Railway Company and wanted an interview with Mr. Striker. That was how their friendship had started. Harvey had had one interview too many with Mr. Striker. All Harvey wanted now was a citizen of the United States to drink with. Mr. Hannerson had had no illusions about himself. He was a good prospector and a fair surveyor, but otherwise he was a total loss. Everybody in Costaragua knew about Harvey Hannerson. People passing them in the street, Mr. Claxon had noticed, had suppressed faint smiles as they noticed that Harvey had found a new chum to diddle with his tales of past achievements. But Harvey had been telling this tale to show that he himself knew everything about Costaragua. More than most people! Because when he went into Las Esmeraldas that time he had found the platinum percentage higher than old Don Orlando's prospectors had reported. He had also found large and appetizing alloy deposits containing iridium. Rotten with it, the stuff was! As he had made this statement a man at the hotel had looked into their little retreat and caught sight of

Harvey's waving hand and had smiled. Mr. Claxon had not been able to withstand that smile. He had listened dutifully to Harvey's statement that he had "kept quiet about that, though." He had been hired to find platinum, and he had found it. At the posada in Cordoba he had had a long evening with that fellow, who had paid him the two hundred dollars agreed on. A fine long evening. . . . Plenty of good hard stuff that time after the trip in the bush. Even now, he told Mr. Claxon, his large slack mouth open and showing great yellow fangs, "they didn't know what they got up there."

Mr. Claxon had experimented once or twice in San Benito with the people he met, but he failed to find anybody who took Harvey Hannerson seriously. And at length, when he found it advisable to go down to the coast without meeting the administrador of the railway, he was extremely doubtful whether his letter to his company would be accepted as a genuine hunch or the vague conjectures of a man at a loss to justify his long stay in the capital.

And yet, Mr. Claxon reflected as he lay on his bed at the Pension Francia, in the twilight under the mosquito bar, there were plenty of justifications. Things were in a state of peculiar tension in Costaragua. Harvey had been profanely voluble concerning the trouble at railhead, where the niggers had to wait for their wages. There was one train each way daily as far as San Paulo, and while Mr. Claxon was in the capital a slight earthquake near Albetorre had stopped traffic for a week. On the way down Mr. Claxon had been nearly cooked at a tiny wayside station without a tree in sight, a station set in the middle of a strip of alkali desert, while the smell from a burning axle filled his nostrils. Defective rolling stock. The cars were shabby already and the track was in very truth two streaks of rust. As a going concern Mr. Claxon thought, the C. C. R. made a pretty poor show. Six hours to do forty miles! He wondered what the Nassau Street people would think, amid their mahogany desks and sectional bookcases, if they had any notion of the actual state of affairs. And here he frowned heavily at the skating scene on the varnished match-board wall, for this was his problem. How was he to prevent them knowing the actual state of affairs and continue to hold his job of travelling representative? He would have to move smartly. He would have to work. And if the truth is to be set down with

cold exactitude, Reid B. Claxon did not care for work. He preferred optimism and the labours of enthusiastic friends.

Another problem, more easily handled and already more hopeful, was to get hold of some authentic information. It speaks well for Mr. Claxon's intelligence, which was generally hidden behind his optimism, that he planned to lay siege to Señora Munn for that purpose. That was work of a sort, because he was fond of pretty ladies. He preferred a roving life because it afforded him numerous opportunities for casual gallantry. If he took up this scheme of approaching Mr. Francis Striker through this Orlando Perkins and Mr. Perkins through Señora Munn, he would have to resign himself for a while to the seclusion of the Pension Francia. He would have to play cards with the old girl. One thing, she had her own private quarters properly screened. There were no flies or mosquitoes in there. There was ice from the machine in the railway yard. He had seen a lot when passing along the veranda. Queen Victoria and King Edward the Seventh in gilt frames covered with muslin. Well, it might be worse. When Harvey came down there would be a little fun. He and Harvey were from neighbouring states and they had similar tastes. And almost simultaneously with this pleasant thought came the reflection that he must get something done before Harvey came.

Like a shadow across his mind recurred the memory of Señora Munn's sudden recollection of something and her consequent embarrassment. Something she knew about that fellow Perkins; perhaps that was it. Mr. Claxon had once been a newspaper man. He had enjoyed the friendship of room clerks and hotel detectives. He had once been second-in-command in organizing a Grand Centennial Exposition for a great Southern city. It had never come off because everybody in the great Southern city had been expecting the other fellow to foot the bill. But Mr. Claxon, in the course of these experiences, had learned that many things are happening all the time in a place which never get into the papers. He had learned that men and women socially insignificant often had knowledge of events and rumours useful to a man like himself. It never entered his head to expect Señora Munn to divulge what she had been thinking about when she pulled herself up that afternoon. He would be satisfied if he got into her confidence so that she might ease his way into that of Mr. Perkins, supposing Mr. Perkins came to

Puerto Balboa. But there was something that even the friendly Harvey didn't know about the outfit. A field surveyor far ahead of even the excavators wouldn't know much about headquarters any way. It was probably politics, and Harvey Hannerson had the North American's contempt for and ignorance of Central American politics. Harvey Hannerson, in fact, after several years in Central America, knew nothing about it beyond a little bad Spanish and even worse associations. He was one of those drifting yet capable employees who never have a good word to say of any concern they have ever worked for. They have a genius for baseless scandal and imaginary grievances. If Mr. Claxon dealt in optimism, Harvey Hannerson's spiritual stock-in-trade was a sort of convivial bitterness. He was a drunken martyr, sacrificed to invisible malevolences. He would go home to a harmless little town in Pennsylvania, and after remaining in a species of mental coma for a while, like a convalescent from some shattering and often mortal sickness, would start off to Chile or southern China, to carry out surveys for a railroad which would bring the blessings of his own civilization to thousands of people for whom he had nothing but an irrational contempt.

Mr. Claxon became aware of a drop in the temperature. It was five o'clock. The sun, declining behind the huge rugged mass of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Agata to the westward, had left Puerto Balboa in shadow, while the sea on the horizon was a line of incandescent fire. The netting stirred in the first eddies of the evening breeze, which came down across the Corcubion from the Sierra. Mr. Claxon welcomed it gratefully. The sudden prolonged shriek of the railway shop whistle roused him to put his feet on the floor. He was suddenly minded to take a more cheerful view of things. What would Nassau Street do down here, anyway? The climate of Costaragua, even up on the plateau, was something to be reckoned with. He himself was only just recovering from his ride, on a mule from San Benito down through Ortygia to Cordoba, where he took the launch for San Paulo. Three days on a mule, by George! On the trip up, when he had reached San Benito, he had slept clean round the clock.

He began to get ready for dinner. The men from the shops would be coming in soon. He decided to get ahead and enjoy a shower first, if there was any water in the tank. Señora Munn

had a small iron windmill which would not work. She had a man to take its place, and often he did not work either. Mr. Claxon put on a bathrobe and strode, towel on arm, along the veranda and through a passage. At the back was the señora's garden. It was a confused jungle of tropical plants with beds here and there showing the señora's attempt to grow English flowers under impossible conditions. White cockatoos sat on branches and watched Mr. Claxon with expressions of pure idiocy, as though they were the ghosts of dead lunatics in paradise. Cages full of small birds, resembling unsatisfactory experiments by the Creator, stood along the back veranda and gave out an uproar which seemed imperceptibly blended with the smell of an insanitary zoo. Two lean cats with intolerably long chins, which gave them the appearance of being caricatures of elderly and ignoble spinsters, sprang from the steps and hid under the verandah as Mr. Claxon strode past. There was something of the Roman senator in a toga about Mr. Claxon in a bathrobe, with grass sandals on his feet, his thick white shoulders surmounted by a brick-red neck so sharp in its demarcation that it resembled a terra-cotta head stuck on a white marble torso.

In the bathroom the sounds of the garden came in a confused manner through high green louvers beneath the eaves. Mr. Claxon tried a shower. The water came down in a brisk spray. He liked the roughness of the grating under his feet. Somehow the act of taking the shower put him in a good humour and conceit of himself. He was in the prime of life, forty-one to be exact. As he soaped and rubbed himself vigorously he glanced swiftly in retrospect of his life since he was a reporter in a town in Ohio, covering hotels, department stores, and social events. He had married, and two years later, while he was in Chicago hunting a job, his wife died. His daughter lived with his sister in the Ohio town. To him there was something incredible in the fact that his daughter was twenty and engaged to be married. His domestic life was no more than a useful milestone in his career. He was fond of alluding to the fact that he and his wife had never had a quarrel. It was true. He had scarcely ever been at home during the two years. Mr. Claxon had been moving round warily in those days looking for the sort of position he had ultimately discovered, a position where his particular brand of optimism served as a substitute

for work and brains and executive energy. "Send Claxon over and let him smooth it out" became a slogan with a certain newspaper publisher. And then from that Mr. Claxon had got into the stock-selling game. It had taken him to New York, a young widower, fresh, alert, and interesting to women. He had had opportunities to marry again, but somehow he had evaded them. He lived a cleverly adjusted double life, and the partners of his numerous and brief love affairs were willing enough to take up with some other man later on. They made no claims, for he had made no promises. He moved about the world with a selective eye. Sometimes in a temporary hot ardour for some exotic girl he got into trouble, as in San Domingo, and was hustled out of the way by a rival who meant business. With his persuasive temperament and cocksure manner of assuming that his own affairs were of paramount importance, he had got on in the world. He had a faculty for hitching his wagon to stars. He formed frail contacts with the great and the near-great. But his world was the Eastern States of North America, and in Costaragua, equipped with only his phrase-book Spanish and incomprehension of their national life, he was merely a *gringo* who frequented the cantinas.

Nevertheless, he dressed himself that evening with considerable complacency. Under the guise of seeing the world, he was in the habit of seeing, at any rate, the underworld wherever he landed. He had been too busy when he landed from the *Santa Brigida* to take any notice of Puerto Balboa. It looked like a dump and probably was a dump; but he had a dim subconscious feeling in his mind that a dump often yielded unexpected fragments of discarded information useful to a man like himself. There was a side of Puerto Balboa which Señora Munn, quite properly, of course, knew nothing about. Already he had a suspicion that one or two of the railway engineers who sat looking down their noses at Señora Munn's frijoles and fried plaintains didn't spend their evenings in the church in the Plaza San Martín. Mr. Claxon, on his way to the telegraph office, which was on the opposite side of the square, with a message for New York, had seen the Cantina Sol just across the street, and had made a mental note. It was half café, half posada. An automatic piano, with gaily decorated panels reflecting the harsh light of a kerosene lamp over the bar, formed the background to a scene of truculent conviviality. The height of the lamp had thrown all the faces into shadow beneath the broad-

brimmed sombreros. Only a young man in riding breeches and in his shirt sleeves, his gray cowboy hat pushed back from a pink forehead, had drawn Mr. Claxon's eye. The young man had bawled, "Set 'em up, Jo!" and Mr. Claxon in the telegraph office had heard him with pleasure. It seemed to him that an hour or two with the patrons of the Cantina Sol, where a girl with shapely arms and swinging hips served drinks to the tables by the piano, would afford him some diversion.

CHAPTER II

THE bar of the Cantina Sol was a solid mahogany and zinc platform running back from the side walk. José Barrillo, who owned the place, remained behind this barricade all the evening. The girl with the shapely arms and swinging haunches, who had caught Mr. Claxon's eye, was Gina. She cranked the mechanical piano, sang songs, danced with customers, and served the tables which could be seen dimly under low semicircular arches at the rear. Señor Barrillo was a survival of the French days in Panama. He had won five thousand dollars in the lottery at New Orleans, and on securing the money had returned to Costaragua to open a posada in his native town of Cordoba. He spoke French and English with a curious rapidity, as well as Spanish. But he could read nothing save numbers and simple words of obvious meaning. As Mr. Claxon looked across the sidewalk, which was several feet above the plaza, he saw a short, powerful figure with hairy arms and chest emerging from a white shirt, surmounted by a square block of a head. The back of it ran straight down into a solid base of neck muscles. The face was built up from a square blue chin. The cheeks were full yet not puffy. There was nothing pugnacious in Señor Barrillo's features. Even the square chin was not aggressive any more than the Rock of Gibraltar is aggressive. The expression of his eyes, which he turned upon the new arrival, was mild. They were brown, like a dog's. The formidable solidity of the man's physical structure was a perplexing contrast with his expression and movement. Without hurry he seemed to move quickly.

"Señor," he said, in a small tired voice, "what can I do for you?"

He placed a bottle of rye whisky on the counter with a glass and a jug of water. He drew one broad powerful hand over his heavy moustache.

Mr. Claxon, pouring out a drink, was about to reply when the piano commenced a ringing staccato tune. He made a sign of salutation and drank. Leaving a peso on the bar, he moved

into the dusky cavern of the cantina. Some young Costaraguans were gathered round a small pocketless billiard table. Several men in stained khaki riding clothes were drinking at a table. Mr. Claxon recognized them for engineers from the railway office who lived at the Pension Francia. He paused at their table.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "what's the big news?"

The young men looked at each other and smiled. They were English. They had no experience of a man like Mr. Claxon. They were not entirely at their ease in his presence. He was middle-aged and his aggressive friendliness embarrassed them. He made a courteous gesture and passed on.

"That's a funny chap," said one of the young men. "What is he, do you think?"

"One of these Yankee drummers who think they are going to sell a lot of machinery to the boss," said another cynically.

"They say he has been trying to land a contract for rifles," said a third.

"Easier than landing the rifles," was the low-toned comment. "Well, it must be a fine thing to be a traveller. Keep your own hours. Travel and see the world. Ah, he's going to have a yarn with the colonel."

"Bit of bad luck for the colonel," sniggered the youngest of the band, just out from London.

Mr. Claxon heard none of these comments upon his motives and designs. He was moving slowly in the cavernous depths of the Cantina Sol, lighted by small kerosene lamps hanging against the yellow plaster of the arches. The view of those young Englishmen had been suddenly enlightening. They were, for all their truculent demeanour, mere boys. They would be even less satisfactory than Mr. Leake or Señora Munn. They probably knew nothing at all. There was, he reflected, as he edged past a table where two men in sombreros were playing checkers, no reason why they should know anything.

Mr. Claxon had been moving over to the rear of the place to get out of range of the piano and the noisy racket of the billiard table. He thought the tables were all vacant, against the wall. But as he drew out a chair he found himself looking down into a broad yellow face whose smoked glass spectacles reflected the light.

"Goot-evening," said the owner of the voice in an amiable growl.

"Good-evening," returned Mr. Claxon. He was uncertain whether to withdraw or take a chance. "I didn't see you."

"No?" The broad face with the black shining disks in place of eyes became creased with smiles. "You did not see me? I am big enough, I should think. But the light is very bad, *ja.*" He spoke in the thick precise accurate diction of the educated German.

"You don't mind if I ask you to have a drink?" said Mr. Claxon.

"I don't mind? That is a goot one!" growled the other man. He stood up suddenly. "Egscuse me. My name iss Von Stücke."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Sticker," said Mr. Claxon, and he laid a card on the table beside the German's beer glass. The latter took it up and held it close to his face. It read:

THE HISPANIOLA SYNDICATE
New York
Mr. Reid B. Claxon
Travelling Representative

Colonel von Stücke held out his hand.

"I am very bleased to meet you," he said and sat down. "Will you 'ave a glass of beer?" he inquired. He clapped his hands loudly. "This beer is goot," he went on. "It gome from my gountry. In Germany is goot beer."

"That's right," said Mr. Claxon heartily. "In my country all the beer is made by Germans. Excuse me, Mr. Sticker, but I think I've seen you at the hotel Pension Francia.

"That's true. I am there three days now."

"How do you find business?"

"Business? How do I find business?" Von Stücke peered forward and emitted a chuckle: "Very goot!" and he laughed.

Suddenly Mr. Claxon was aware of a heavy perfume in the air. He looked up and saw the girl standing at his shoulder. He smiled but the girl did not return it. She gazed at him with fathomless black eyes, without pleasure and without rancour. But Mr. Claxon was fascinated. There was something magnetic about Gina. She was not stout but sturdy. Her arms were strong without being flabby. Her breasts were firm and high. Her apron, worn over a yellow cotton gown, was drawn in to reveal a supple muscular waist. Her hair, black and glossy, was drawn into a bun on the back of her neck. It framed a

face that even Mr. Claxon saw was not Costaraguan. It had an aquiline shapeliness that would have been sensuous but for the austere firmness of the mouth and the enigmatic solemnity of the black eyes.

"Gina, *mein schöne mädschen, Cerveza por el Señor,*" rumbled Colonel von Stücke.

"Yes," she responded quickly in Spanish, "beer for the señor. For you too? You have only had three bottles, and every night you have ten. Shall I bring them?"

"Gina, whatever you command you know I obey," he answered, very much amused.

Without another word Gina, without smiling, went away quickly to get the beer.

"She is a clever girl," said Von Stücke, lighting another cigar.

"Very handsome," agreed Mr. Claxon. "Does she speak English?"

"*Ja,* she speak Spanish, German, Italian, and English. So do I. She is a Ligurian. You speak no languages?"

"Just a little Spanish," admitted Mr. Claxon.

"You Amerigans!" breathed the German heavily. "You are like the English. You can never learn languages."

"That's right," agreed Mr. Claxon without much enthusiasm. "We get there, though, just the same."

"You think so? Well!" He waved his cigar. "That's all right."

"You say business is good, Mr. Sticker?" said Mr. Claxon. The colonel looked at him through the cloud of smoke he had just expelled.

"My business is always good," he remarked in a low deep tone. "If not in Costaragua then somewhere else."

Mr. Claxon looked at his companion in perplexity.

"You mean . . ." he began. Suddenly a tray descended between them. He forgot his confusion of mind and looked in frank admiration at the girl leaning over him. He smelled the perfume she used, a thick confusing redolence. She poured out two glasses and set them down. The colonel began to speak in Spanish.

"Tell me, Gina, has the comandante decided to do what you asked him?"

"He says yes," she answered, busy wiping the tray, "but I think he means no."

"And the chief of police—he says yes and means no?"

"That's what I think," she muttered, and stood for a moment looking toward the bar, her hand touching the great coil of her hair.

"You speak English, Gina?" said Mr. Claxon. She glanced down at him and took up the tray.

"Yes, I speak English," she replied in a tone of bitter contempt. She gave him another glance as though to see if he were serious in such a question and hurried away to another table. Colonel von Stücke was amused at the expression on his companion's face. He began to explain.

"She don't like the English," he said. "She's got a baby and the father was an Englishman."

"Here?" asked Mr. Claxon.

"*Nein!*" said the German in a ringing tone, to be heard above the clangour of the piano. "She gome here . . ." he shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands. "She was in von of those blaces be'ind the Cathedral—you know. She get this job. Señor Barrillo is a man who knows a good thing. She is what you call a square peg. She is smart. That Englander, he was a damfool."

"What do you mean?" ask Mr. Claxon. He was interested in the man as well as the girl. He seemed to have some sense. He seemed to know something.

Colonel von Stücke, professional soldier, drew his hand down his white drill tunic with the yellow horn buttons and shook slightly with laughter. His short clipped moustache bristled as he worked his lips in and out.

"My frient, there are just two kinds of people in this world, the cans and the can'ts," he boomed, lifting his glass and moving it horizontally before his nose. "Prosit! Let us drink to Gina. I say he was a damfool because he have this girl and he can't see she is one of the people who can. Smart, smart."

He dwelt on the word and suddenly broke out again. "I mean she is glever, as you say."

"She's a good looker too," said Mr. Claxon, gazing across the room. One of the young men from the railway shops was dancing with her. "She don't seem to object to those Englishmen," he added.

"That is business," said Colonel von Stücke. "Eferybody haf to do business with the English. Eferybody haf to speak English. *Sie sind sehr schlau!*" he muttered, half to himself.

To Mr. Claxon he added, "You are American, *hein?* Goot! I salute you, my frient. Now, as to Gina, you are surprised because I say she has what we call a *Kopf*. Ach, what a pity you speak no German; I could egsplain it to you so much better! Howeffer, in this gountry are blenty of all nations. And in my business it is necessary to speak all languages."

"What business is that?" asked Mr. Claxon. He was somewhat dumfounded by the sudden explosive communicativeness of this man, whom he had seen at Señora Munn's table d'hôte. It had never occurred to him that this elderly German was likely to be of any use to him. "I was going to ask you for your card, Mr. Sticker."

"My cart! Of gourse!" The colonel took out a huge wallet and drew from it a large card. Mr. Claxon was surprised. It read:

COLONEL ERICH VON STÜCKE
Director, National Military School
San Benito, Costaragua

"You understand, in this gountry I am a berson of imbordance," said the colonel, with a peculiar intonation. "But sometimes it is necessary to have some diversion. In Germany I drink beer. All over the world I drink beer when I was in the army of the Argentine, I go to the Bierkonvent in Buenos Aires. Now in San Benito I am a person of imbordance and the great people think it is *shrecklich* if I go to a café and drink beer!" He shrugged and showed his broad palms. "So, when I come to Puerto Balboa, I visit the Cantina Sol and talk to *mein schöne mädschen,* Gina. She tell me all about herself, her life, her heart, and all her hopes. Now she think you are English and she dry up, as you say."

"I guess I'll tell her I'm an American," said Mr. Claxon. "She's a very handsome girl. Say, Colonel, you'll have to excuse me not knowing your rank. You see——"

"That's all right. That's all right," said the colonel, waving his hand with deliberate majesty.

"Colonel," Mr. Claxon leaned both arms on the table and put his hands to his face as he drew on his cigar: "Colonel, I'd be glad to take your advice in a business matter. Being a stranger in the country, I don't seem to get anywhere, if you know what I mean."

"You don't get anywhere!" Colonel von Stücke repeated.

His face, in spite of the beaming convexity of the dark glasses, became hard and dominant, his voice roughened. Colonel von Stücke, late major of the Imperial Army, late military adviser to the Argentine, Paraguayan, Chilean, and Equadorian governments, ex-staff officer of the Transvaal Republic, and now acting in an extremely confidential capacity to the Striker-Perkins' interests, looked at Mr. Claxon in austere inquiry. He then allowed his glance to drop upon Mr. Claxon's card, which lay just beyond the wet rings made by the numerous glasses of beer. It told him nothing, however. He looked up again and breathed heavily.

"I do not understand what you mean," he said. You told me just now you get there. What line of manufactures do you sell?"

"Securities, mostly," said Mr. Claxon.

"Segurity! Well, we are in the same business," rumbled the colonel jocosely. "Berhaps it is power stations you sell. I sell it too." And he laughed and drank. "But you mean you work for a banking house, *hein!* Well, my frient, there is no money in this gountry. You cannot sell anything here. This is a fine gountry with grand scenery and mines and very rich soil; but there is no money. *Warum?* Why, because the English, the German, the American banking house say *Nein.* No segurity, no money. That is the reason you see me here. I manufacture the machinery to make segurity. Then you will see plenty of money come to Costaragua. But now you gan sell nothing, my frient. Go home."

He raised his glass and made a circular motion in the air and drank.

Mr. Claxon drank also, but he was not thinking about going home. As he had told Señora Munn, he was not a military man, but he had seen a little of the world. It struck him that if it was worth Colonel von Stücke's while to give such advice it might be worth while to discover why. And again it occurred to him that there was one explanation which would account for the peculiar attitude of both San Benito and Puerto Balboa people since his arrival. And yet it seemed extremely unlikely, he mused. He glanced across the tables and saw Gina gazing at him intently. He smiled. He had been fairly successful with women. To his surprise Gina neither returned the smile nor looked away. She seemed to be measuring his suitability for some purpose. It could by no stretch of optimism be construed

into a sign that she was very much impressed by Mr. Claxon. On the other hand, it was obvious that in some way he had engaged her attention. He continued to look at her while he told Colonel von Stücke that he couldn't go home till the *Santa Brigida* came in. And moreover he wanted to have an interview with Mr. Orlando Perkins, who was aboard, he understood. Mr. Perkins would be on the *Santa Brigida*, and if he failed to interest him in the business, he could go home, possibly. When he saw Gina coming toward them he turned to the colonel and found him wiping his glasses.

"So!" said the German. "You have business with Señor Orlando? So!"

Without his glasses Colonel von Stücke was no longer a beaming technical adviser to some machinenfabrik, but a soldier of fortune. Yellow pouches hung beneath his cold gray eyes.

"Why not, Colonel? You know him?"

The colonel put on his glasses and poured out more beer.

"We cannot disguss it in this blace," he said heavily, as Gina came to the table. He began to count out some one-peso bills and place them under a saucer. Mr. Claxon rose so that his face came near to Gina's and their eyes met.

It was almost like a physical shock to him to meet that brilliant, hard alien scrutiny. Seen close, those eyes, which he had admired, aroused in him a new and alarming emotion. It was not so much that they seemed to appraise him, to weigh his spiritual and moral values, as that they revealed no belief in such qualities in any man. They were like living eyes in an antique face. The perfection of the lips, the nobility of the nose and brow, illumined by the lamp hanging on the wall, obliterated from his mind the harsh reality of her life as enunciated by Von Stücke. He was aware of a trembling uncertainty in his heart. He was almost afraid to smile, for a smile is a symbol of transient happiness, a ripple on the surface of the soul. But even while it seemed to him that her face had the coldness and austerity of stone, her gaze declined and a faint quiver at the corners of her mouth restored his belief in her humanity. He saw her reach for the money and smooth it reflectively. He heard her quick speech to the colonel in Spanish he did not catch.

"*Si*," said that gentleman gruffly, "*Amerigano, Gina mia.*"

She flashed a sudden glance, like an illumination from within,

upon Mr. Claxon. For the first time it seemed that she really looked at him as a human being.

"That's me, Gina," he said. "At your service."

"Mucho gracias," she murmured absently, looking at him the while. "You will come here again, Señor?"

"I'll be right back," he murmured, moving toward her slightly. "I want to talk to you, Gina."

"Me?" She touched herself on the breast. "What you want? I speak you by and bye. When I finish 'ere."

"That's what I mean. You wait. I'll be back."

The broad back of the colonel, sheathed in well-washed and ironed white drill that caught the light, was receding toward the bar. Mr. Claxon knocked the ash from his cigar, started to follow, and then turned again to the girl. She had one hand in the pocket of her apron, the other was busy filling her tray with bottles and glasses. She went on with her work as Mr. Claxon brought his lips close to her ear.

"Say, Gina."

"Si?" she said, her lips curving in a smile of intelligent comprehension.

"I'm coming back all right."

"Si!" she repeated, her head bent over her work. She was smiling. She did not wish him to observe the effect he was making upon her. Out of the corner of her eye she could see him fidgeting, straightening his lapels, turning the cigar in his mouth, dusting cigar ash from his shirt bosom.

"You want me to come back, eh?"

"Oh, *si, si!*" she repeated, lifting the loaded tray. Suddenly she looked at him. "Señor, you go now. By and bye I am finish. I see you by and bye."

"Gina, I like you," he said as he began to move.

"I like you," she said gravely and made a sudden little gesture of the hand in front of her lips. And even while he was looking back at her, her face became grave and immobile, the black eyes changed from friendly brilliance to an expression of sombre intensity. It was as though the simple statement of her feelings had suddenly revealed to her the extent of her folly. Once more she moved among the tables, collected, watchful, and austere.

As Mr. Claxon followed the German out into the gloom of the arcade he stopped and looked back. He saw the full brown eyes of Señor Barrillo gazing at him over the full black mous-

tache. He saw Gina walking toward the bar, carrying her tray on a level with her face. It seemed to him there was something symbolical in the girl's pose, as though she were performing a ritual in some heathen temple, while her soul was absent. He saw her fix her eyes upon the man behind the bar, and when he spoke, with one eye-brow twitching, she replied, only her lips moving, like a woman in a trance. The booming of the piano was punctuated by the snapping fingers of a young man who was swaying to the tune on the sidewalk, his coat hanging on one shoulder, his dark face watching the movements of his feet. The young man's companions began to clap rhythmically, their heads bent over to follow seriously his execution of the dance. Gina, with loaded tray, moved down the perspective of the cavern. Seen from behind, her tray held above the heads of men at the tables, she resembled even more closely a priestess. Amid the dull clamour of the cantina, Mr. Claxon saw her moving with an alien beauty that only he could perceive.

He found Colonel von Stücke at the end of the arcade contemplating the huge mass of the church silhouetted against an invisible moon rising over the sea. The hot night, seen from that corner of a street in a coast town of Costaragua, was impregnated with magic. To Mr. Claxon it was at though he had never seen such a moon rise before. The formidable solidity of the church between the two towers, with the mysterious luminosity of a moon just risen blood red above a calm sea, resembled the portals of a heavenly city. Up one flank of the near tower an aged figure in cloak and broad-brimmed hat was climbing a flight of stone steps to the belfry. Two of the old women, who had been seated under the arches selling sweetstuffs, startled Mr. Claxon by creeping past him and crossing over to the church doors. They looked up at him for a moment, and he saw their faces under the yellow lantern. They were faces covered with a fine tooling of wrinkles, like smoky bronze, their black Indian eyes gleaming up at him from beneath their ragged dirty *corbatas*. They were, he felt, extraordinarily at home in this place. The hot humid darkness, the looming towers, the dust into which their bare yellow feet sank as they crossed the plaza, was part of their lives. He thought with a slight shudder of the sickly trash they sold. He had bought some from the girls who walked along the train at the wayside stations. And as Colonel von Stücke turned to greet him it was borne in upon him how every-

thing in the country was in the hands of aliens. There were himself and the colonel, Señora Munn and Mr. Leake. There was, for that matter, Francis Striker, the man who year after year, by extraordinary efforts, had kept the railway moving on into the jungle and up the valley until at last it reached San Paulo. He was an alien too. Señor Orlando was no doubt native born, but his father was English and his mother Russian. And there was also Gina. She was no Costaraguan costeno. The colonel had said she was Ligurian, had spoken once at least in Italian. She was something Mr. Claxon, with all his experience, had not met. He could not make out the reasons for her peculiar quality or the motive behind her sudden interest in himself. Was it that she had penetrated the disguise, so to speak, of a man out for amusement, and detected the specialist in organized optimism, the successful promoter of publicity campaigns, the able second in command in charge of the Great Gulf Centenary Exposition which failed because the citizens wanted everything without paying for it? As he came up to the elderly German soldier of fortune, Mr. Claxon had an unexpected air of decision. He was going back to the Cantina Sol before long. Colonel von Stücke wrinkled his nose over his iron-gray moustache and rolled his cigar in his full fleshy lips.

"Where are we going?" Mr. Claxon asked.

"To see a crazy frient of mine, an Englishman," said the colonel. "Sometimes I like a little Scotch whisky, good whisky. My frient, he has some very goot."

"What is this Englishman? Is he anything like Mr. Leake?" The colonel laughed shortly.

"Nothing at all like him. He teach in the school. I like a little whisky. My frient Señor Pelham he likes a lot of whisky."

"What we call a souse," suggested Mr. Claxon.

They struck up a wide dusty street, keeping to the high narrow sidewalks which in the rains were the only refuge from the roaring torrents pouring down to the sea. They walked single file, Colonel von Stücke throwing over his shoulder information about Señor Pelham.

But Mr. Claxon was not thinking of whisky-loving Englishmen. He was thinking of Gina. He recalled her expression as she looked at him— "as though I was the first real man she'd ever seen," he put it to himself. Perhaps he was. Out loud he said to his companion:

"Gina, how did she come to be in a place like this?"

The colonel's shoulders went up in reply.

"She gome 'ere from Havana," he said. "She think what they all think, if they leave a big blace and gome to a small blace they make more money. But I tell you, my frient, you had better look before you jump. Gina's the comandante's girl. He tell her he is going to give her a blace of her own out on the shore. High-class Albergo, where he can take his frients. That is the gustom in this gountry. In San Benito . . . yes, I need not egsplain."

"No," said Mr. Claxon from behind. "But Gina's not doing a thing like that, is she?"

"She'd be a blootty vool if she did not," grunted the colonel. He stopped, and when Mr. Claxon had come up close he added, "I dell you for your own goot," and went on down the street.

Mr. Claxon made no comments while he followed his companion down the street. Under his easy acceptance of himself as an American, he possessed one of the most useful qualities in the world, a cynical resiliency of mind. "Well," he thought, "she's a fine girl." He was going back to see her again. He had seen the comandante on the dock. He was a short broad man with only one eye. The other had been lost in a battle with the Rio Taga Indians, who had never been subdued. It was his left eye, and on his left breast he wore a medal, a silver disk hanging on a red ribbon. Colonel von Stücke said he was one of the trusted officers of the coast army which still maintained its ascendancy over the plateau regiments. He was a mestizo, a dark-skinned person with many black spots on his face and much gold in his teeth. The colonel gave Mr. Claxon the impression that he did not like the comandante.

"I gall them the three musgedeers," he rumbled. "They work together in Puerto Balboa. The comandante, the jefe of police and the jefe of the Gustom House. Bad for the soldiers. They are all thieves, the soldiers down here. And the bolice are the same. Whad is needed is more dizibline. Here is Señor Pelham's blace. You hear him. He is singing." Colonel von Stücke halted and turned an amused countenance upon his companion.

Mr. Claxon listened and heard a male voice singing to the strum of a guitar.

"Bravo!" boomed the colonel clapping his hands loudly. The house before which they stood was shuttered. Only a faint

light showed through the louvers under the eaves. There was a sudden silence within, as though the unexpected applause had frightened the performer. Colonel von Stücke knocked on the shutters with his stick. A voice bade him go with God. He gave his name and said he brought an American gentleman—a *caballero Americano*—to see his friend. The voice, amid interruptions, expressed the conviction that no such animal existed. It was, the voice elaborated in sarcastic Castilian, a contradiction in terms. The interruptions, which consisted of a female voice crying, were abruptly quenched, and someone began to open the door. Señor Pelham, a short round-shouldered creature with weak eyes and a nose of unusual impressiveness, looked out.

Mr. Claxon thought he had never seen anything like Mr. Pelham. He wore white trousers supported by suspenders with elastic cords running through pulleys and ending high up between his shoulder blades. Grass sandals on his feet did not conceal the alarming length of his toe nails. He wore a down-drooping moustache on which drops of moisture yet shimmered. His hair was thin in front and in a small tonsure at the back. Under his arm he held a guitar. His shirt was stiff starched with huge cuffs turned back, and the buttonholes at the neck were torn away.

The peculiar feature of Señor Pelham's apppearance was his expression of disillusion. He was not evasive, but he was one of those men whose glance tends to fix itself distractedly on distant objects. It made his occasional direct glance seem powerful.

There was a patio at the rear, and a hammock in the angle of the building was still swinging. A table with turned legs bore a small kerosene lamp without a shade, a square bottle of whisky and a glass. Señor Pelham kicked a couple of chairs toward the table, and disappearing into one of the rooms, returned with glasses and a jug of water.

"To what do I owe this unexpected pleasure?" he demanded, mounting the hammock with a dexterous movement. "Help yourselves, gentlemen. To what, I repeat, do I owe this visit?" He strummed the guitar, muted it, and suddenly laid it down.

"I came to see you last night," said Von Stücke, "but you were not at home."

"I was giving one of the engine driver's wives a lesson on the mandolin," Señor Pelham replied. "Can you imagine any-

thing more insufferably imbecile? She is thirty years old and looks it. They live up the line. I have to go out there on a hand car. The husband, who pays for the lessons, has his suspicions. Not of me. He spends his days trying to solve the problem of keeping an eye on his wife while he is away on his train. He tried to draw me on the subject. Did I say they were fellow countrymen of mine? From Kentish Town. Yes, he tried to draw me. While he was bringing me back on the hand car. Can you imagine the scene? Perspiration pouring off him as he works the handles, I sitting in front enjoying the breeze while he tries to discover if I've ever seen his wife in the town."

"Have you?" asked Mr. Claxon, rather amused.

Señor Pelham looked blank for a moment. His nose with its high bony ridge seemed to be sniffing for an unfamiliar antagonistic odour.

"Often," he announced unexpectedly, "but I don't tell him that. She's a trollop, of course. She isn't learning the mandolin to play it under his window or to dance before her lord and master. It's her way of succumbing to the influence of the tropics." He took up his guitar and struck the strings. "I don't blame her," he went on with a fixed stare at nothing in particular. "In that house up the line, I wouldn't blame her if she chopped his head off with a hatchet when he came home and stuck it on a pole on the line for the next driver to see. *Pour encourager les autres.*" He set up a clangorous discord and muted it with his fist.

"You seem very cheerful about it, Mr. Pelham," said Mr. Claxon.

"I? I am always cheerful in the evenings. Why not? I hold a position here. I stand *in loco parentis* to the rising generation of Puerto Balboa. The enlightened republic of Costaragua has established schools, but has unfortunately left the rising generation at liberty to please itself about attending. But they have never heard of night schools, and it will be a long time before I tell them. The nights are sacred to the muses." He struck a chord. *"Aux armes, citoyens!"*

Mr. Claxon regarded his host, who began to pour out a staggering drink of whisky, in some perplexity. Evidently Señor Pelham was aware of it. He drank, and still holding the glass close to his lips and contemplating its contents, he remarked:

"I suppose you think this a come-down for a Cambridge man. It isn't really. Education is supposed to enable us to dispense with externals to live our lives independent of the world. Has it ever occurred to you that practically all the paraphernalia of civilized life is unnecessary? Have you ever reflected that the great masterpieces of art, literature, and music have been produced by people who didn't wash regularly?"

"Now, now!" exploded the colonel, and Señor Pelham, looking for the first time direct at Mr. Claxon, smiled a pale watery smile. His eyes were an almost colourless blue. His face was so pale it was like a corpse suddenly smiling.

"Our military friend holds other views," he said, feeling for his cigarettes in the hammock. "He thinks that a powerful standing army—imagine a Costaraguan soldier standing when he can lie down—a railway to the top of Mount Cornaru to carry tourists who want to see the lake of fire and brimstone, and Puerto Balboa full of factories, breweries, and churches, would improve the country. I don't. I think the country is quite all right. *Pauper non est, cui rerum suppetit usus,* as Horace has it. I sometimes even doubt whether my own despicable attempts to educate the youth of the town are worth the trouble. They'd be much happier stark naked on the beach."

"Sunk in barbarism," rumbled the colonel.

"It's only a squabble over names," replied Señor Pelham. "What is barbarism—Puerto Balboa dreaming behind her surf and praying in her huge dirty old church, or the cities of North America? You prefer one kind, I prefer the other."

"We must have progress," said the colonel in a tone of finality.

"Must we? I suppose we must. Or where would our military men be? They'd have to work." Señor Pelham looked at the colonel and gave his pale dreary smile. "What brings you down this time, Von Stücke? God! what a name for a believer in progress! What does the great man desire now? More progress, I suppose. What a happy country this would be if the foreigners would only leave it alone!"

"You would not be sitting in your hammock drinking whisky," said the German heavily. "You would be pegged down on an ant's nest. El Chico would make short business with you, my friend!"

"I don't believe in your El Chico," muttered Señor Pelham sourly. "He's a bogy to frighten your soldiers with. *Malbrouck*

s'en va t'en guerre!" he sang suddenly and began to play the tune. His voice was startling in its volume for so puny a frame. Suddenly he stopped. Mr. Claxon heard a sound behind him. He turned and saw Señora Pelham, and he received another shock. She wore a shapeless garment tied at the waist with tape. Her long black hair hung down over her shoulders and framed her dark heavy features. She held a naked child in her arms face downward. On her bare feet were grass slippers like her husband's. In fact, they were her husband's. She was regarding Mr. Charles Marney Pelham, B. A. Cantab., with an expression of puzzled misery. She spoke in Spanish in a timid voice.

"*Si,*" he replied, in a curiously mild tone. "Go to thy father's house. The señors wish to remain an hour."

Mr. Claxon remained in a reverie for some time. He found himself in some mysterious manner drawn to Gina by this spectacle. There was a quality in her which he felt without being able to define it. It was the antithesis of Señora Pelham. He saw what was the matter now. Señor Pelham, with his college education, had taken a step down.

"No," Señor Pelham was saying with much emphasis, as though he were trying to convince himself. "Your El Chico is one of these myths in the making. Somebody has seen a boy on a mule, and from that, by the well-known mythopæic faculty, so common among the *hoi polloi,* they have evolved El Chico—" he looked for a moment at Mr. Claxon, who was leaning forward in the bent-wood rocker—"and every time some chiclero full of aguardiente gallops into Cordoba, the tale goes round that he is one of El Chico's men. The chicleros probably start it. The boys in my school in the Plaza play at El Chico. I see them trying to put one of the smallest brats on a goat."

"So?" said the colonel. He turned to Mr. Claxon. "What Señor Pelham says is true. El Chico is known to every man, woman, and child in Costaragua. But Señor Pelham, he don't believe he exists. I have been many kilometers into Las Esmeraldas, and I have seen funny things, my friend."

"Las Esmeraldas?" repeated Mr. Claxon. "What's doing in Las Esmeraldas?"

"El Chico, I am telling you."

"Well, I'm telling you I don't know what you're talking about, Colonel. Who is El Chico?"

"A bandit," drawled Señor Pelham, playing softly. "A dwarf bandit, who rides through the forest on a milk-white steed or a coal-black stallion. Carries his head in his hands, like the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow. A sort of Costaraguan Robin Hood."

"I guess you're pulling my leg," Mr. Claxon suggested. "Your mention of Las Esmeraldas naturally interested me because that is my business. My firm have interests in Las Esmeraldas."

"Then it is El Chico you must see," said Colonel Von Stücke. "Unless you get the Minister of War to lend you a regiment of soldiers."

"Which he would be delighted to do," commented Señor Pelham grimly. "Have you ever seen him? General Martinez is a living example of Napoleon's saying that an army travels on its stomach. The colonel worships the ground he treads on."

"You have to have your joke," said the colonel.

"If you think it a joke, that's your affair," said the schoolmaster, stretching his short legs in the hammock. "My impression is you came down here to get out of his way. One inhalation of his garlic was enough for me. He distributed the prizes—one for each pupil to prevent bloodshed—and it was all I could do to remain in his vicinity. A powerful personality, Colonel."

Mr. Claxon suddenly laughed and reached for the bottle.

"He got no consideration for anybody," said the colonel.

"Why should I have? I've asked the Minister of Education to appoint me to the university at San Benito, and he won't do it. Last year I went up there just before the rains. I might have saved the money and bought a case of your terrible German champagne."

"It might be terrible, my frient, but when I sent you two bottles you drink it quick enough."

"That's true, Colonel. Send me some more."

"You know very well he can't appoint you because . . . well . . . humph!"

"Because of family reasons, I suppose you mean. You're very delicate, Colonel. Do you happen to know the wife of the Minister of Education? Señora Doña Endoxia Paracleta Mirasol?" he mumbled out the sonorous syllables with malicious relish.

"You know too much—that is the trouble, my frient," observed the colonel.

"And still they gazed and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew,"

quoted Señor Pelham. "I suppose that is the impression I create. Well, he can keep his university post and Señora Mirasol as well. *Otium cum dignitate* for me. Who wants to meet all those old frumps and holybolies in the Calle Sucre and the Avenida de Majo? And the asses at the Jockey Club. And the Saturday afternoon corridas. And the idiotic little tram cars, crammed with a populace simply jumping with fleas, and drawn by two mules the size of fox terriers."

"Oh, *ja, ja!*" growled the colonel, and turned to Mr. Claxon with his broad face crumpled with amusement and annoyance. "You must not belief all he says," he warned.

"I understand," said Mr. Claxon. "He's a knocker."

"A what?" asked Señor Pelham, drinking. "Oh, I see. One who knocks down, depreciates. Yes, that's what you call slang in the States, I suppose."

"I'd call it plain English," surmised Mr. Claxon. "In slang you'd be crapehanger."

"Now that," said Señor Pelham, sitting up and lighting a fresh cigarette, "is really clever. One who hangs crape! Well, I admit the description. I am not cut out for social conquests. Tertulias bore me. The fusty grandeur of first families and dowagers in mantillas brings out all that is bad in my nature, especially when the dowagers smoke strong cigars, as they do in San Benito."

"Why did you settle in this country?" asked Mr. Claxon. Señor Pelham gave a short laugh.

"For several reasons, Mr. Claxon. But the most convincing one is that Costaragua, with all her faults, is too enlightened to have an extradition treaty with Great Britain. Do I make myself clear?"

"I guess you do," said Mr. Claxon soberly, looking at the man in the hammock.

"I make no complaint," said Señor Pelham rising upon his elbow and reaching for the bottle. "'The world forgetting, by the world forgot.' Now, Striker-Perkins want to change all that. The Liberals would like nothing better than a whole flock of treaties with Great Britain. And an issue of bonds. Ex-

change professors. Our learned contemporary Carlos Carrillo of the Revista Mundiala, leader of the Modernistas, would go to Oxford, and San Benito would bask in the radiance of a genuine pundit from the banks of the Iris, supposing anybody there speaks Spanish. All this follows from the railway. And the railway is Striker-Perkins. Ask the colonel."

"I don't need to ask him," said Mr. Claxon. "I knew all that before I left New York."

"And if you live here ten years you'll never know anything else," said Señor Pelham. "That's all there is to know about Costaraguan politics and business. You either want the railway, like Striker and the magnificent Orlando, or you don't want it, like the rancheros of the great valley, who are afraid the peons will become dissatisfied with their present wages of three pesos a month. The railway is the spinal cord of a prosperous republic, say the Modernistas. The railway is a foreign weapon striking at Costaraguan independence, say the Conservatives. You can take your choice. One opinion is as good as the other to me. You, I presume, agree with the Modernistas."

"Absolutely," said Mr. Claxon. He was leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, smoking a cigar. "And the government, as I understand it, are with the railway people. That's the dope I got in New York. Then why don't they go ahead and back the railway?"

"Because," grunted Von Stücke, "of the president."

"Don Hernando Silva," added Señor Pelham. "He's very important. He's the only Liberal who goes to church. His wife, Doña Carmelita is a granddaughter of General Umberto Bustillo, who was present as a cornet of horse at the battle of La Puerta and——"

He broke off suddenly and looked momentarily at Mr. Claxon. Something he saw there made him grimace. Throwing himself back on the cushion he contemplated the tiles and rafters of the house. "Well, he says he was," he concluded.

"With the Liberator," explained the colonel. "Simon José Antonio de la Santisima Trinidad Bolívar y Palacio."

"The Washington of South America," added Señor Pelham in a cynical voice.

"What's all this to do with the railway?" said the mystified Mr. Claxon.

Señor Pelham gave a short sharp laugh.

"Everything," he burst out. "You think Costaragua is a republic. It is nothing of the kind. It is an oligarchy of first families and ragamuffins."

"Do not speak so loud," said the colonel.

"Nobody here can understand my English," returned Señor Pelham. "I am purposely using words which no spy could possibly comprehend."

"I can believe that," said Mr. Claxon in a low tone. "I can't understand you myself."

"I am merely trying to disabuse your mind of the usual North American superstitions about republics. President Silva is a religious Liberal. His wife is a member of the inner circle of Agrarian bigots, the owners of vast estates in the rich Camagua Valley. Those people would like to see a change of government. They would like to send Striker and all his engineers out of the country. The coffee people, on the other hand, want the railway as far as Cordoba. The foreigners want a network of lines all over the place. They are all pulling in different directions. The result is deadlock. The railway moves slowly because even the Agrarians can't cancel the concession without compensation. I'm not sure, if it came to the point, whether they'd have the nerve . . ."

The voice of Señor Pelham died away as though his thoughts had submerged it.

"But, listen," said Mr. Claxon to the colonel, "I don't see now what all this has to do with Striker-Perkins. They've got the concession, and the government is in favour of the work."

"No money," said the colonel. He took a carved meerschaum from a leather case and began to charge it.

"How can that be, when my firm, for one, stands ready to float a loan?"

He looked from one to the other, waiting for some solution of the problem confronting him. He felt that if he could get either of these men in a corner he would eventually capture the secret. The fact that he was exaggerating did not disturb him. He knew the Hispaniola Syndicate certainly had not the resources to float an issue of bonds by themselves. He also knew that neither Señor Pelham nor Colonel von Stücke would be aware of it. He felt he was justified in taking certain liberties with the truth in order to get information.

Señor Pelham slapped a mosquito and turned on his side the better to observe his visitor.

"The Agrarians won't agree to foreign loans," he said. "That's the beauty of politics in this country. A foreign bond issue has to be approved by the Second Chamber two-thirds majority. The Constitution of Sixty-eight provided this safeguard at the same time that the Second Chamber was created—by the gentlemen who intended to sit in it. You follow me? Since the dissolution of the League of the Captaincy General, of which General Umberto Bustillo was the leading spirit, there has always been a party in the Second Chamber who are working for a revival of that federation. They think that if the Central Latin republics face Europe and North America united under an appointive assembly with a high commissioner but remain autonomous at home they can get better terms. They are the principal opponents of the Modernistas, strange to say. They think they can eat their cake and have it. They imagine Costaragua coöperating with her neighbours! They prefer a theoretical rapprochement with their fellow bandits to anything sponsored by the resident foreigners, who are not only bandits but gentlemen."

"Leaving out the sarcasm," said Mr. Claxon, "I guess I understand what you are driving at. You don't like Costaragua."

Colonel von Stücke emitted a hoarse cackle and pointed derisively at Señor Pelham.

"Gott soll huten!" he boomed. The man lying in the hammock took his eyes from the rafters of his house and reached for the bottle.

"No, and I don't like you either," he muttered under his breath. He added, out loud, as he poured the last of the whisky into his glass.

"Schoolmasters, you see, have to know something of history."

"Now I don't agree with you at all," said Mr. Claxon judicially. "This is mostly ancient history, I take it. You don't tell me that these people haven't got the interest of their fine country at heart."

"Of course they have. And their idea of serving the best interests of their fine country, as you call it, is to run all you North American business men into the sea. Surely you can understand a simple little thing like that?"

"Aw, now . . !"

Mr. Claxon experienced an unpleasant sensation. He was aware all at once of the fact that this miserable shrimp of an Englishman, who was wanted at home for some crime, was play-

ing with him. Señor Pelham, not to put too fine a point on the matter, was revealing the same subtle antagonism Mr. Claxon had felt in Mr. Leake. It was strange to him that they should act this way the moment he began to expand and utter the sentiments of a normal human being. He looked at Señor Pelham in a kind of baffled condescension. He was at a loss to explain his own feelings. He wanted to make it clear that he was in no way covetous of Costaragua.

"They regret," went on Señor Pelham calmly, "ever letting the foreign capitalist enter their country. They do not admire your civilization, you see. They have, for example, virtues of which you do not possess the faintest conception. They didn't invite you to come down here and turn their fine country into a bad imitation of the United States."

"Where's all these people?" said Mr. Claxon. "I never met 'em in San Benito."

"You wouldn't," said Señor Pelham. "They live on their haciendas. They live what used to be called a patriarchal existence. Their wealth in land and cattle and crops is enormous. Some of them keep it in gold in great iron-bound chests. Their work people live around them. They grow and make what they need: coffee, sugar, corn, meat, and vegetables. They go to Paris if they wish to see the world. To them," and here Señor Pelham sat up on his elbows and raised his eyes to see the effect he was producing, "to them you and your United States are about as alluring as England with its Manchester and Birmingham. They would like to have an exclusion act against you."

"Why?" demanded Mr. Claxon in disgust.

"For the same reason, my good man, that you have one against the Chinese. They don't like your way of life. They think the country will deteriorate if they have too much of you. And after all, they were here first. Their ancestors were here about a hundred years before North America was settled. What can you do about it if they don't like your face?"

"That's only the one party, and the minority at that," said Mr. Claxon. "I doubt very much if these old deadbeats you mention have much political power. Nobody can stop progress."

"If that's true, I regret it," said Señor Pelham. "But I can assure you that there is going to be an extremely strong attempt to stop it in Costaragua, eh, Colonel?"

"What are you dalking aboud?" asked the colonel.

"You know why the great Don Orlando went to the States," said Señor Pelham. "You also know why the surveyors are in the hotel at Cordoba and Don Francisco Striker is with his father-in-law the president every day. Don Hernando Silva will have to make a decision between the Striker-Perkins interests and the Bustillos. The colonel," said Señor Pelham to Mr. Claxon, "knows that the concession for constructing the Cordoba-San Benito line has never been formally relinquished by the government. The original concession was to Ortygia. This was revoked by the Agrarians and exchanged for one carrying the line to Cordoba. Since that time the new constitution makes it illegal to grant new concessions to foreign capitalists. The Striker-Perkins people maintain it is not a new concession but a confirmation of an old one. The Bustillo crowd, with *El Mundo* making a noise every day, claim that the Cordoba-San Benito line must be built by a native company. Costaragua for the Costaraguans! Liberty or Death!"

Mr. Claxon scratched his forehead.

"Say," he said. "I saw something in *El Mundo* about that. I don't read the language very good, however, and I didn't quite get it. I saw they were bawling out Don Orlando."

"For saying the national army ought to have its own transport, in case of another insurrection. They knew he knew this concession business was coming to a head. *El Mundo* called him a coward one day, because he went to the States at such a critical time for his party. He's the leader of the Modernistas in the Senate, you know."

"You mean they are not renewing the old concessions now under review?"

"The Agrarians are unalterably opposed to any foreigners holding concessions. Can you blame them?"

"Ah, but this . . ." Mr. Claxon turned his eyes upon Colonel von Stücke, who seemed unmoved by these words. "You hear what he says, Colonel?" he asked.

"*Ja,* I hear," said the colonel, smoking with energy, "but I take no notice."

"Of course, of course," muttered Señor Pelham, "but suppose I say I know what brings you down here, you old militarist?"

"Nobody ask you to tell all you know," suggested the colonel.

"I hear all sorts of things," said Señor Pelham.

"I bet you do. Blootty lies."

"Not all lies either, Colonel. There is an under-current of

excitement in Puerto Balboa. Some of the children in the school are soldiers' brats. And the engine driver's wife who is taking mandolin lessons is the friend of the cable operator's wife. Colonel, there is one thing about Costaragua you should remember. There is no such thing as a secret. Everybody knows everything about everybody else. The *auditore* on the train which brought you down has a brother a sergeant in the barracks. They both know you came by Ortygia on mules instead of by the river route. The boat captain told them. If you could listen to the talk in the Cantina Sol when nobody but costenos are there, you would be astonished at the violence of the sentiments expressed. They have only room for one idea in their heads at a time. They are convinced the *sangre azul* people of the Camagua Valley want to take the bread from their mouths."

"That is goot!" grunted the colonel.

"For you. You will stir up civil strife for the sake of commercial profit. You are like the cobbler who thinks there is nothing like leather."

"*Ja!* You should sent it to be printed in *El Mundo,* my frient," he said heavily. He rose slowly and stumped over to the stone water cooler to fill his glass.

Mr. Claxon stared at Señor Pelham. The sudden vision of what was going on in San Benito turned his mind away from Gina. Now he understood what had not been clear to him up there—the reason why Don Francisco Striker had remained in seclusion. Mr. Claxon had set it down to a mere contemptuous coldness and indifference. It had been nothing of the kind. It was a matter of life and death to the railway to get the line through to the capital. Suppose the conservatives succeeded in their attempts to put through this reactionary confiscation. The railway would never sell a bond. Moreover, and this was very much to the point just now, the Las Esmeraldas concession would not be worth a nickel.

He stared at the man whose voice, querulous and yet holding echoes of academical distinction, had conveyed this formidable information. He became aware of a change in his attitude toward Costaragua. He understood now how Señora Munn and Mr. Leake, knowing what was in the air and yet unable to discuss it, were feeling. He recalled Señora Munn's nervous reluctance to identify herself with Don Orlando. And he re-

membered Colonel von Stücke's significant words—"Now you gan sell nothing, my frient. Go home."

"In *El Mundo!*" repeated Señor Pelham. He sat up in his hammock and yawned. Colonel von Stücke was drinking water. His head was thrown back and his little finger stuck out as he held the glass. Señor Pelham watched him with an abstracted expression on his pale dissipated face. He took up his guitar and began to thrum a marching tune. It was his escape from the unfortunate circumstances of his life. To deride the fundamental instincts of his own race was his poppy and mandragora. He drank heavily at times; but alcohol was no anodyne for him. It only sharpened his perception of the irremediable disaster which had closed his career. He had not even been original about it, he reflected as he struck the strings. Secretary of an estate development company, he knew the treasurer was laying his plans for an epochal swindle. Indeed, it would not have been possible to bring it off without taking the secretary into the scheme. But Mr. Pelham had doubted the ultimate success of that intricate undertaking involving hundreds of thousands. He planned a coup of his own. With seven thousand pounds in cash and bonds he had disappeared.

He struck a chord as he watched Colonel von Stücke start across the patio to regain his chair. It had seemed a vast sum even after disposing of the securities in Paris at a high rate of discount. Leisurely he had toured the world in foreign steamers, avoiding English possessions. How difficult that had been! he reflected with bitter pride. How had he proposed to solve the problem he had created for himself? He had drifted while the police, who were at fault, waited for news of him in the ports where embezzlers and absconders were accustomed to gather. Mr. Pelham, instead of turning up in Buenos Aires, had got off the Hamburg-South American liner at the Cape Verdes. A Rotterdam tramp, bound west for Caribbean ports with coal and general, had a spare cabin. It was through the scuttle of that spare room, fusty with being shut up so long, that he saw the jewelled combers assaulting the palm-fringed beaches of Puerto Balboa. He saw the forests shimmering in the heat and the ineffable blue distances of the ranges. And he had gone ashore. Six, seven years ago.

He began to sing, in that voice so disconcertingly mellow and powerful, like a cornet giving out the notes of a trombone. He watched the colonel, who had never explained why he wandered

about the world, a talented soldier of fortune, far from the Wilhelmstrasse. He enjoyed pulling the colonel's leg. The colonel was a sort of perverted imperialist. He had spoken more than once of Blood and Iron. Señor Pelham knew that the colonel had organized the police patrols for the railway construction camps which were now established beyond San Paulo. It was called "The Intelligence Department." Señor Pelham had made fun of it more than once. The engine driver's wife had told him a story of men who were known to be spies in the company. And he knew that the spirit animating the old Spanish families in the interior was a consciousness of this huge organism slowly creeping up the mountains to the plateau, coiling itself round the estates and some day contracting so as to crush the very life out of them before absorbing them. Like a boa constrictor, he thought, as he sang a ballad of romantic war:

"Marching, marching, gaily on we go,
Ever with our faces to the foe!
Many a gallant action, many a rescue brave,
And many a lad is sleeping in a soldier's grave!"

"Whad bedder grave gan you have?" said the colonel in a hoarse shout. "You wand do die in your bed?"

Señor Pelham put down his instrument and got out of the hammock. He walked past Mr. Claxon as though he were not there. To the American the humped diminutive figure with the white cross of the wide suspenders between his shoulder blades was a fascination. He had never before been at close quarters with a white man who had gone native. It evoked in his own mind a profound reaction. He wanted to get out and back to Gina. He understood Gina more clearly now. He knew what she felt, living among these people of Puerto Balboa. And the growing uneasiness in his mind concerning his business affairs had the effect of turning him toward her strong alien character. He caught the expression in the colonel's eye as the latter's gaze followed Señor Pelham into the house. There was a whimsical smile on the face of "the old militarist." The dark convex glasses caught the light from the lamp. It was as though Colonel von Stücke had received a sudden illumination. Mr. Claxon heard his voice, harsh and sententious.

"My frient, my frient, you have begome a Costaraguan citizen and you fly in the face of your destiny."

"We costenos are a separate race, Colonel," came from the chamber behind them.

"*Ja wohl,* and whad is your interest as a costeno? For the railway."

"When the railway stretches across Costaragua there will be no costenos. There will be only employees of Striker-Perkins."

"And a goot thing too," retorted the colonel. "The peoble of the San Paulo Department do not work. They say it is too hot. When they haf to punch a time glock we shall see."

Señor Pelham came back, his grass sandals slapping the stone floor, carrying a large bottle and a packet of cigarettes.

"Have some of the wine of the country, gentlemen," he said, taking out a wooden stopper. "Aguardiente. Water with teeth in it!"

He rinsed the glasses and served out three drinks of the fiery spirit of the cane.

"Not for me," said Mr. Claxon, getting up and looking at his watch. "I tried it up in San Benito. Not my idea of a drink. Acted like knock-out drops."

"Our frient has an *asignación* with the *nina Italiana,*" said the colonel.

Señor Pelham lifted his glass and emptied it with relish. He glanced at the colonel.

"You had better tell him what to expect in that quarter," said he.

"I haf told him just that," replied the colonel, "bud he don't believe me."

"I believe you all right, Colonel, but you haven't got *me* right," said Mr. Claxon. "I didn't butt in at all. I think she wants to see me on a matter of business."

"Business?" The colonel's eyes opened wider behind his glasses. He was at a loss to understand what business Mr. Claxon could have with the girl at the Cantina Sol.

"That's what I said," replied Mr. Claxon. He did not wish to discuss Gina with these men. He was aware of the extraordinarily improbable nature of his feelings in this matter. He was able to comprehend their incredulity, but he didn't care. He was convinced that he would have to take some definite course in the morning with regard to the interests of the Hispaniola Syndicate. To-night he wanted to see Gina again.

"It's no concern of mine," said Señor Pelham, "but the col-

onel's absolutely right. You are putting your head into the lion's mouth."

"A lion with three heads and three mouths," growled the colonel. "I told you, Señor."

Mr. Claxon lowered his head slightly.

"I guess I can take care of myself," he said in a preoccupied tone.

"She isn't the girl I'd risk a knife in the back for," went on Señor Pelham. He lifted another glass of the spirit and drank it.

"Well, you haven't had any opportunity so far," suggested Mr. Claxon. He took up his hat. "I guess I'll be going along. I'll have to get busy in the morning. See you again, Colonel. Señor Pelham, we'll be glad to see you at the hotel to-morrow."

"At the Cantina Sol," said Señor Pelham. "I never go to the Francia. That's a Striker-Perkins stronghold." He laughed and poured out another drink for himself and the colonel. "At the Cantina Sol. José Barrillo is an amusing posadero. Everybody in Costaragua, sooner or later you will meet them at the Cantina Sol."

"And José will tell you about El Chico," said the colonel. "He is from Las Esmeraldas."

"Fine. Good-night, gentlemen."

The colonel watched Señor Pelham, who was slightly drunk and somewhat aggressive, run before Mr. Claxon. The aguardiente seemed to release a sharp mocking devil within him. He threw open the heavy iron-barred door. He made a deep obeisance, one arm across his chest.

"*Vaya Usted con Dios,* Señor."

The door clanged and Señor Pelham came back slowly into the patio. It was as though his vitality had suddenly run down.

"Why did you bring him here?" he demanded in Spanish, as he prepared to climb to his hammock again.

"He is a good fellow—a *buen hombre,*" said the colonel, "and his company own that concession in Las Esmeraldas."

"He is not to be trusted for all that," muttered Señor Pelham. "That pose of knowing only a little Spanish and being so keen for information is all a blind. He is here to get something for nothing, the big, blasted gringo! Ehric, my good Ehric, I detest North Americans. They stick in my craw. They sprawl and expectorate and they look you in the eye, damn them. They are probably on good terms with God. They wear belts and

ready-made bow ties. They smoke cigars with the bands on and roll them from one corner of their mouths to the other. They incite one to commit homicide while drinking whisky, which they drink in one gulp. If Dean Swift had lived a century later and had written a novel about Yahoos . . ."

He stopped suddenly with a long stare at the stained white-washed wall of the house. The colonel ignored the mutterings of his friend. He was thinking of the Las Esmeraldas Concession. It was dawning upon him that if Striker-Perkins wanted it, and he had heard they did, it would be better if Mr. Claxon did not learn of it. Evidently he had got nowhere in San Benito because the new move against foreign concessions was calculated to depress the values of all kinds of property. Mr. Claxon knew nothing. That was plain from the eagerness with which he had seized upon what was the common gossip of official circles in San Benito. Don Francisco would have no time for a man like this Claxon. The colonel, his head pleasantly swimming with the aguardiente, strove to recall Gina's attitude in the cantina. He was at a loss. She had scarcely spoken to the American. Colonel von Stücke, unaware of the girl's motive, was unable to comprehend the significance of Mr. Claxon's appearance to Gina, the singular appropriateness of his character to the destiny in store for him. He was unable to detect, beneath Mr. Claxon's peculiarities, a talent for perceiving an opportunity as well as a weakness for women. And beyond this again it would have been incredible to the German if he had discovered Mr. Claxon's actual feelings. As the organizer of the Striker-Perkins intelligence department, quite without public credit for it, Colonel von Stücke despised not the smallest fragment of information. It would have been extremely inconvenient if everybody who talked to the colonel in San Benito, where he was military advisor to the Minister of War, knew he was on the pay roll of Striker-Perkins. The editor of *El Mundo* had made a fine fuss over that business of organizing the police in the construction camps. The position of a foreigner in San Benito was one of extraordinary delicacy unless he were a merely commercial representative of a European firm. The editor of *El Mundo* was forever fulminating against foreign influence in the army. The colonel moved with the utmost circumspection in the capital. Only when he came down to Puerto Balboa, where the army was definitely on the side of the railway and the population

were out of sympathy with the first families of the plateau, did he abandon the pose of an impeccable Teutonic martinet.

Now he thought of the Las Esmeraldas Concession. The history of that enterprise was known to him. It was one of the subjects of conversation in many circles in San Benito. It was on the Colorado River, and the colonel was one of the few foreigners who had ever visited the place. It was on that occasion, when he was on the staff of General Martinez, that he had seen, a long way off, the celebrated El Chico. They had found some examples of that person's work in front of the church in the village.

Colonel von Stücke had none of Señor Pelham's dislike of North America. He was a German, and he took on easily the colouring of his environment. His adhesion to the Striker-Perkins interests was inspired by his belief in their destiny as saviours of Costaragua. But he was also a soldier of fortune who was getting on in years. The notion of a man like Mr. Claxon wandering around in San Benito, with the concession of Las Esmeraldas in his pocket, was productive of other notions. Bound up, as Señor Pelham had said, with the railway were all the other development schemes of the Costaraguan highlands. There was to be a hydro-electric power plant on the Colorado River, where it plunged three hundred feet over a precipice before reaching the Corcubion. The plans for that were in the Striker-Perkins office in San Benito. The Las Esmeraldas Concession would be enormously augmented in value when the country was opened up, and instead of El Chico's victims impaled on thorn trees or pegged down on ant hills there would be high-tension electric wires from ridge to ridge and the sound of the stamps and excavators in the valley.

Like a confused panorama these thoughts wavered before his closed eyes. They gyrated round a central core of self-interest. Striker-Perkins, embodying the Anglo-Saxon element of Costaragua, the principle of sane material advancement, should have control of a potentially important source of wealth like Las Esmeraldas. It required machinery, heavy machinery, to get the stuff, and how was machinery to reach the Colorado if the railway was not carried up to Cordoba at least?

He opened his eyes. Señor Pelham was lying in his hammock with one wrist across his eyes, the other hand grasping it, and a spasm of pain contracting his lips.

"Whad is the madder?" asked the colonel. "You don'd like the American? Well, he is gone to see the *nina Italiana.*"

It struck him that the *nina,* who was the comandante's mistress, according to the gossip of the town, would be a useful source of private information. If the scheme materialized and she opened the Casa Bellavista, as was rumoured, she would be invaluable to Striker-Perkins.

He opened his eyes again. Señor Pelham had said something. Colonel von Stücke, for whom civilian crime had no existence, because martial law was to him the only law worthy of the name, had ample tolerance for his friend's peculiar past. But the words he heard Señor Pelham mouthing now had nothing to do with that. He took off his glasses and wiped them.

"Whad!" he said harshly. "You—and Gina? Watum?"

He stood up and gazed over his glasses at the hunched figure on the hammock. "You tell that Amerigano he will get a knife in his back! Whad aboud you?" He pointed a thick forefinger. "You are kebd here for goot reasons, my friendt. You would be a blootty vool if you make trouble with Gina. Whad do you think you are blaying ad? You get the men into that verein of yours—trade-union soziety you call it. Thad's goot! Now I tell you, the Gompany will pay. To everybotty who work for their interest they pay and pay goot! The liddle you get now will begome big if you haf any sense. So no more of Gina, my friendt. You hear me? Whad about your frau, eh?"

He listened, one ear inclined, his eyes heavy lidded, as though he were some angered war god hearkening to the excuses of an erring minion whose shade crouched before him.

"Bedray?" he echoed. "Bedray? Whad are dese swine to you? Bevore the Amerigano that talk is all very fine. And as for Gonzales, you don'd need to worry. You won'd see him again, I think. We know all about Gonzales, my friendt. Much more than you have told us. *Nein!* You will do well to think of the Gompany. As you Englanders say, make the best of it."

He listened again to the figure, who stared with wry mouth and sardonic eyes at the deal table with its thin-flamed lamp. Outside the heavy breathless night was as dark and silent as the interior of a mountain. Señor Pelham spoke again without taking his eyes from the lamp.

"Ach! You can go over the frontier for a liddle. The Gompany will take care of the family. Dese costenos gif no trouble. By and by you can gome back. Is it a deal? You forget your

fonny fancies. Gina is a smardt one. It takes all kinds of peoble to make a world, my friendt. Whad do you say? You make a scare with that Amerigano, and that is goot! Bud you blay the vool with Gina, whad do you think happen to you, eh?"

He prepared to go. The man in the hammock did not move, and Colonel von Stücke, who had had a wide experience of men like Señor Pelham, did not even look at him again. His quick ear had caught the slip-slop of grass sandals outside, but he knew nobody in that street would comprehend his hoarse, rumbling English. He walked into the front room and laid his hand on the door as there came a knock. He opened.

Señora Pelham, to the elderly Bavarian, bore a strong and disconcerting resemblance to the pictures, common in his youth, of the Virgin and Child. A shaft of moonlight poured down upon her long, sombre, and unlovely features and upon the naked body of the sleeping child in her arms. The decrepitude of her garments was no longer perceptible. She stood, framed in the doorway like a Mater Dolorosa, and with bowed head she entered.

"Señor," she whispered without looking at the colonel, "my father says the men at the railway will not work tomorrow. He says they will ask for more money."

"*Si*," he wheezed. "Thy father, Mercedes, is an old gate that rattles with every breeze. What is it to him if they do not work? He can go out in his boat for fish just the same."

"Señor, my husband—he speaks to the men and tells them foolish things, my father says."

"And do they believe him?" asked the colonel, stepping into the street. He seemed to have no interest in Señora Pelham.

"*Si*, Señor. They believe everything he tells them. He is a man of much education."

"Well Mercedes, you need have no fear. The saints will protect thee. I have given thy husband good advice to-night. Sleep in peace."

"Go with God, Señor," whispered the sad faced woman, and slowly closed the heavy door.

CHAPTER III

MR. CLAXON, hurrying through the hot night, a solitary disordered gringo, was the prey of unfamiliar fears. He had always been a dweller in two different worlds. There had been the world of North American business, of material cares, of job hunting and conventional social usage. He had been moderately successful in that life. And there had been, beneath the surface of his mind, a nostalgia for the imagined romance of tropical lands, for the love of exotic and glamorous women. When his work had taken him abroad, Mr. Claxon, Reid B. Claxon of the Hispaniola Syndicate, had discovered the second world in which he moved with a certain secret exhilaration. He had confided this preoccupation with sensuous and perhaps sensual happiness to no one in either world. Indeed, when he thought of his daughter, who was engaged to be married, he had a feeling of spiritual insecurity. It was as though he had experienced a partial transmigration of his soul, while his outer envelope retained the power to move back and forth among the generations. There had been times when he had contemplated an abandonment of the old life. Not to go native. That was farthest from Mr. Claxon's thoughts. What he saw in vague grandiose visions was an adventure involving him in an emotional conflict. He saw himself achieving a conquest over vast forces, winning the adoration and fidelity of a courageous brilliant woman. It was what he called to himself in rare moments when the vision cleared and sharpened, just below the surface of his mind, "my romance." Sometimes he did not believe in it. Often he forgot it, and roamed like a mere drifting gringo in search of shabby intrigues.

Now, as he came out into the Calle del Mar, which led through the Plaza San Martín to the harbour, the figure of Gina became identified in his thoughts with these hoarded illusions. The difficulties which awaited him hung like a threatening storm cloud in his mind, riven at short intervals by the sinister warning of Señor Pelham. Not the girl he would "risk a knife in the back for." The phrase in some way brought to Mr. Claxon a

new and alarming consciousness of Costaragua. As a business man he was able to feel the Stars and Stripes over his head, no matter what lunatic developments these Latin republics might stage. But in the case of Gina he was suddenly an adventurer and dependent upon himself, confronted by a situation demanding personal courage and resource. A knife in the back was something that Mr. Leake, as United States Consul, would be very reluctant to investigate. There would be nothing anybody could do about it. And yet, as he saw the vast mass of the church, with its deep shadow flung halfway across the Plaza, he was aware of a determination in himself to see Gina again, as he said audibly, "at all costs." It surprised him, like something observed in another man, to discover this feeling in himself. It made him scrutinize the ideas he held about the girl. It made him try to analyze her appeal. "Personality," he called it to himself, fumbling about among well-known words for a strange new experience. It was scarcely adequate. Compared with the emotions of his life, the conventional ready-made sentiments of his early years, and the promiscuous intimacies with which he diverted himself abroad, this new interest was staggering. It slowed his walk involuntarily as he gained the high arcade and saw the yellow light of the Cantina Sol. What was he doing? he asked himself. In the sombre darkness of that arched passage the whole oppressive spirit of a priest-ridden land lay heavy. It was like an enormous cloister. In the centre of the Plaza a mule was tethered to the fountain, waiting for the master who stood by the lighted doorway conversing with Señor Barrillo. It stood out black and formidable just beyond the shadow of the church. The old women who had crouched in the arches were gone. The mechanical piano was silent. Puerto Balboa, behind the pounding surf of its cay, was asleep.

Without the scuffle of feet and the tinkle of the piano, the irregular cavern of the cantina seemed to Mr. Claxon to be charged with an oppressive atmosphere. Smoke still hung about the lamps, as though it had been cleared of its customers by gunfire. An overturned chair gave the impression, somehow, of violence harshly suppressed. Only the click of the balls away to the left, under inverted funnels of hard light, and the forms of the two players, broke the silence. These two men, dressed in white tunics with gold buttons, as they marched to and fro carrying their cues over their shoulders like bayoneted rifles, seemed to be performing some intricate military evolution just beyond

the radius of the light. For a moment, as Mr. Claxon came down the centre aisle among the tables and turned away to the right, they paused and watched him.

He sat down in the shadows and wondered where Gina was. Had she gone away for the night? He drew out a fresh cigar, bit the end off, and felt for matches. Señor Pelham's words came to him again as he drew the match along the under side of the iron table. "Not the sort of girl I'd risk a knife in the back for." How did that drunken little shrimp know what sort of girl she was? Señor Pelham, who had run away from the law, would probably run away from a knife and a girl too, if she was like Gina.

He was seated facing an angle in the wall of the alcove. He could make out dimly a door in the corner. As he sat smoking, his elbows on the table, this door began to open. A light from a lamp shone low down through the widening aperture, a lamp held in the hand of the girl who was ascending a flight of steps from the vaults under the Cantina Sol. As she held it up it illumined her face, and he saw the dark flash of recognition in her eyes. Slowly she came into view, and setting the lamp down on the top step, closed the door on it. With a glance at the billiard players across the room she came up to him and put her hands on the table.

"You come?" she said, looking down at the table as though recalling the right words. "I get you a drink, eh?"

"Two," he said. He laid his hand on one of hers and sought to bring her gaze to meet his own. "One for me and one for you."

She drew her hand away and with a finger to her lips made a motion of her head to indicate the billiard players.

He watched her as she walked toward the bar, which was out of sight. He was unable to fathom her behaviour. He glanced again at the man whose partially bald head was now thrust into the light over the billiard table as he squinted at the balls. He had many rings of gold lace on the sleeve out of which protruded a thick hairy fist. He saw the red eyeless socket of the comandante and the white medal on the red ribbon dangling as on a torn tendon. That would explain Gina's discreet warning. He was able to get a certain obscure satisfaction from this because it cleared his mind of a faint doubt. He had wondered, as he walked up the Calle del Mar, whether he had not imagined her interest in himself. But when she came toward him again with

a tray on which was a single glass with a long green bottle and a siphon, he realized that he was still ignorant of her motives.

"You drink—I take some," she said in a low tone. She sat down opposite to him and appeared to meditate. He poured out some of the green syrup and squirted soda water into it. Now that he was with her again Mr. Claxon forgot the words of Señor Pelham. As he pushed the glass toward her he said:

"What's the trouble, Gina? Anything wrong over there?"

She brought her glance away from the spot on the tiled floor; slowly, as though reluctant to abandon the train of thought she had been following, and looked at him. She did not smile. Gina rarely smiled. She seemed instead to give voiceless approval to the smiles of others. Now she looked at the man before her with an air of abstraction, as though he resembled something she had long ago imagined but had half forgotten. There was a sudden clash of voices from the billiard table, the light rattle of a cue on the tiles, a laugh of derision, and Gina, under cover of these noises, leaned forward and spoke swiftly as she lifted the glass of syrup.

"Señor, this place is no good for me."

He nodded quickly in reply.

"Time you quit. Why don't you?"

"How can I? I am here now, without money. And if I had money, Señor, do you think a girl like me can leave Costaragua?"

"You tell 'em, Gina. Let me help you."

"You help?"

She looked carefully round until her gaze rested on the men at the billiard table.

"Sure I will. Tell me what you want. You see, Gina, it's this way, I want you."

She kept her eyes on the scene across the vaulted chamber and pondered this declaration. She spoke what English she had clearly and without grotesque accents, and she understood it in the same way. But English, nevertheless, was to her an instrument of limited range. It served mainly for hard concrete facts on the top of her mind. Her sharp clear Latin intelligence, inherited from the mingled strains of mediæval Genoa, where Levantine slaves and Sardinian sailing masters reared families of strong dark youths and maidens in the Lower Town, fumbled with the strange unlovely language of the modern sea rovers. Her mind ran on the jewelled bearings of Italian speech. Her hesitation now was the result of her uncertainty of Mr. Claxon's

meaning when he said he wanted her. So did that fat black-moustached creature in the dirty white tunic who lay flat on the table, his thick legs bulging in their crinkled duck trousers, stuck out to make a difficult stroke. So did Morelos, the chief of police. These men, with the chief of customs, Señor Valientes, wanted her very much indeed, but not in a way that would induce them to consult her own happiness. They wanted to capitalize her ability, her personality, and her integrity. They extended to her their protection in return for complete subservience to their will. She had a perfectly clear conception of what they wanted. They were, in their own way, enlightened and progressive officials. They were supporters of the Striker-Perkins interests and policies. They were mestizos of the coast region, with much Indian blood and some Negro infusions from runaway slaves in the days of colonial rule. They were sensualists to an extent not only distasteful to Mr. Claxon but inconceivable to him. Gina, looking once more at him, understood that. She saw that it would be hopeless to attempt any explanations. He would not comprehend the primitive attraction such men found in a white girl who was nevertheless a Latin, a girl who stood out among the wearers of golden combs in the houses behind the Cathedral like a pale lily among brown weeds. It was the possession of their souls by a demon, this inarticulate hunger for white women who were not dull and insipid. She found that he was gazing gravely at the iron table, oblivious of her scrutiny, as though he had only seen the full significance of his words after uttering them. But when at length he looked up he found her sharply cut lips upturned at the corners and an expression of interest in her eyes.

"*Si,*" she said. "Well, Señor, what shall I do?"

He discovered that this was her character, direct as a bullet.

"Gina, where is your house?" he asked.

"In the Calle Potosí, the next street." She nodded toward the rear wall of the cantina. "I live with the family of the *auditore* Señor Ugarte," she went on. "He tell me you come—*Amerigano comercial*—from San Paulo on the *ferrocarril.*"

Mr. Claxon recalled the swart aquiline features of the official on the train who had clipped his ticket and pointed out the gaunt gray cone of the volcano Curaba when they came out upon the lower reaches of the Corcubion Valley. He comprehended how impossible it would be to keep anything secret from these people. They did not read. They talked. They talked forever

and forever. He heard them on the train, the musical torrent of words accompanied by glances of extraordinary vitality and intelligence. Among them news drifted like the seeds of the forest, on the winds of rumour, fertilizing every mind in the province, proliferating into grotesque narrations. It was almost as though the rich fecundity of the tropical earth was duplicated in the minds of the people, which were manured with a century of rotting useless vegetation, out of which came an impenetrable jungle growth of ideas, with (so it seemed to Mr. Claxon) an occasional tall story.

"Yes?" he said gravely. "I come from San Benito. I was up there on business. You like to go up there, Gina? It is a fine city. Cool weather. Not like this place."

She shook her head with decision, took a sip of the drink and pushed it toward him.

"Me? No. Señor, I want"—she flashed a glance at the billiard players—"I want to go to New York."

He was aware of a profound sense of delight. It had all the vague background of an instinct. It took into consideration neither Gina's motives nor his own selfish philosophy. It simply lifted him to a plane of pure sensuous feeling. He discovered now that the dull ache at the back of his mind all the evening had been this very consciousness that this girl would always be part of this environment, that his dreams were impracticable and futile. Now he looked at her with a sudden concentration of energy.

"You want to go to New York?" he said in a low tone. "I thought you were fixing to open a new place. The colonel told me."

She put her finger on her lip and looked down. He recalled suddenly that phrase about the knife in the back. The two men at the billiard table were arguing, their heads close over the balls, the dark poll of Señor Valientes contrasting with the gray tufts and polished dome of the comandante, which was like a profane tonsure. Mr. Claxon persisted.

"I don't care a hoot for them fellers," he said. "What can they do to you? You don't have to take orders from them, do you?"

"What do you say, Señor?" she answered with a critical glance. "Me, I have to take care of myself. You speak—" she made a gesture with her hand, discreetly—"what do you say

to me?" Her hands dropped as though resigning the impossible task of explaining her thought in English.

"I said," replied Mr. Claxon, bending over the table, "that I wanted you. I want to tell you what I mean, and you . . ." and he imitated her warning finger to the lips.

She regarded him gravely. All this was a mere clearing of the ground. She had been through this before. She had endeavoured to elude her destiny by appealing to men who had at once unconsciously reminded her of that destiny. She had no conviction yet that this would not be another fiasco. Men were—so she phrased it to herself—beasts. She had offered them fidelity more than once, and they had not even known what she was trying to do. She had waited for another chance. Now this big gringo, whose face showed he had been drinking, was telling her that he wanted her. It was a novel phrase in her ears. They all wanted her, in some sense or other, but they did not say so. Men had wanted her ever since she had reached Havana as the servant of that Spanish dancing couple. She hated men. Above all she hated men like the comandante, men who had wives and children and yet would spend an evening among the golden combs behind the church. He had selected her for his especial attention and had beguiled her with the plan to open a place on the beach beyond the Pension Francia, a *casa de moda,* with music and dancing, where the *extranjeros* of the railway could get discreet diversion. The growth of Puerto Balboa warranted such an investment. He and his frineds, the *jefe de polizia* and the *jefe de Aduana,* would put up the money.

"Si," she said, as though coming to a conclusion of her own. "You don't understand this place."

"Yes, I do," he answered, studying the waxlike pallor of her face with a sort of timid audacity. "I've been talking to some men about it. I know about you and . . ." he indicated the comandante.

She remained silent for a moment, looking at him. It required a fresh consideration of his character and of her own plans, since he knew about her. A woman always assumes, in a strange man's presence, that she is for him a romantic heroine. She would have him think her a creature of mystery, the prize captured by some other extraordinarily successful male. Gina remained silent, not merely because she needed time for thought, but because instinct told her that this man was prompted by

some emotion of which she had not discovered the key. She had intended to use him for her own purposes, paying him squarely in her coin for what he might do. But now she paused. She was not sure what he meant when he said he wanted her. She mistrusted her own judgment. She was unable to credit, for a moment, the truth of her intuition. And then, with the inevitable glance across the cantina to see if she had been noticed, she smiled.

"Who tell you?" she asked. Her face bore a curious expression when she heard the name of Señor Pelham.

"Señor," she said, "I finish now. You come to my house?"

She rose with decision and walked away to the bar. Mr. Claxon, as though acting under orders, remained where he was. So far as he was aware, those two men, who were now putting up their cues, had forgotten his presence. He saw them move toward the door. He heard their voices raised in amiable chaffering with Señor Barrillo. He was aware of Gina, her back to him, speaking to them, her hands moving rapidly in a series of eloquent Latin gestures. The comandante placed his broad thick body close to her and laid his arm across her shoulders. Mr. Claxon could not see the bar, but he imagined Señors Valientes and Barrillo leaning negligently against it, watching the scene with approval. He drew his gaze away and fixed it upon the table. He was filled with an inexplicable bewilderment at his own feelings. He strove in vain to recapture the easy carelessness of his mood when he set out that evening from the Pension Francia. He could not believe that he had played with the design of staging an affaire between himself and Señora Munn. He retreated from the memory of his own vagrant desires, which were no more perhaps than the offspring of a stunted youth.

He endeavoured to outline a plan. He was conscious of a longing to leave Costaragua at once. This could not be. He discovered at the back of his mind a conviction that his business would take him up country again. He had sound arguments now which would be listened to in Nassau Street. And he began to formulate some scheme whereby he could induce Gina to go with him. He did not stop to think that such a companion would hamper him in his enterprise. He had a feeling, indeed, that the scheme was bound to be impossible anyway, yet he clung to it as he stared at the table. And then he heard the harsh voices

recede and the sound of footsteps. Señor Barrillo came out from behind his bar and was advancing toward his last customer.

"Señor," he said, his large brown eyes full of an almost religious pleading. "It is time to shut up. One o'clock now." He made an apologetic gesture.

"Where's Gina?" he asked. "I didn't pay her."

"Gina?" repeated the other. "She has gone home."

Out in the arcade he turned heavily to the left. He could make nothing of this. His mind was as dark as the night under the arches. Prudence told him he ought to go back to the hotel. But what was prudence to him now? She had said, hurriedly but distinctly, something about going to her house. Well, he would go. He was unable to do anything else, even if he got that "knife in the back." Gina was no longer the girl in the Cantina Sol. She was the disturber of his spiritual peace. He saw before him now the waxlike pallor, the imperturbable black eyes, the shapely lips with the quirk at the corners, the pose of her body as she walked, like a priestess in a ceremonial rite. It was out of his hands. He must go. He turned the corner. If he found another turning below that would take him past the back of the cantina. It was very dark. The moon illumined the heavy tiles of the opposite roofs. The Calle Potosí, when he came to it, was flooded with moonlight, and he paused to get his bearings.

In that white molten glow the line of low, heavy-roofed buildings resembled a street in a city of the dead illuminated by a dead sun. Mr. Claxon had often had the impression up in San Benito that after dark he was moving on another planet. It was then that he remembered, with a sort of remorseful nostalgia, the flashy garish brilliance of the towns at home, with their corner drug stores and saloons, the gaudy circus posters and night signs, the big dirty interurban trolleys going off with a grinding crash, the feeling of secular friendliness in the lunch rooms and cigar stores. He remembered it now. He had a feeling that this silent empty street led away from all that. He sensed a fear in his heart that this business on which he was bound was destined to take him out of his depth. He had always been able to feel that he could run to a consul. But if the ideas fermenting in his brain came to anything he would have to take care of himself. That was Gina's phrase. She had to take care of herself, she said.

As he stood uncertainly surveying the perspective of the Calle Potosí he became aware of a figure standing in the doorway. It was too far to see whether it was a man or a woman. He was not even sure it had been there when he first turned the corner. It was just a shape in the dark frame of the door beneath the shadow cast by the overhanging roof.

The high narrow sidewalk disturbed him. It gave him the feeling that he was creeping along the Calle Potosí like a second-story man. Except, he reflected, that there were no second stories. As he came nearer to the house where he had seen the figure, he stepped deliberately down into the dust and took a diagonal course which brought him to the farther side opposite the door. But it was no longer open. It was at one of the heavily barred windows that he now saw the figure of Gina. She saw him hesitate and put her hand through the bars to beckon him. As though the spirit of the country were penetrating his consciousness, he looked up and down the street before walking over.

She put her hands out to him as he stepped upon the sidewalk. He could see her face with the black eyes fixed upon his own as he slid his fingers under the loose sleeves of her dress and grasping the firm flesh pulled her to the bars. She caught hold of his coat.

"What's the idea?" he breathed heavily, his hat brim crushed against the bars. "You goin' to let me come in, Gina?"

She shook her head, her lips only an inch from his own forming a deliberate passionate negative. He stared at her, clenching her arms with a sort of tactile hunger, his breath coming in gasps.

"No?" He raised the arms he was holding and put his lips to them. "Tell me, Gina."

That was just what she was unable to do in so many words. The sudden impulse to keep him out was due to a flash of intuition. It was symbolical of what she wanted of him. He had to detach himself somehow from the vast multitude of men whom she knew only as beasts of prey. Instead of speaking she put her hands on his shoulders and gave him a slight shake.

"By and bye," she said enigmatically and smiled earnestly. She added, grasping the bars and looking at him: "This is Costaraguan way. You don't like it?"

"Yes, I like it. Whatever you say. You know what I

thought? I thought: she keeps me out because somebody is in the house."

She fixed her eyes steadily upon his. She was no longer smiling. There was in her pale face an expression of resignation, as though she were aware of the inevitable nature of her destiny. But she was intelligent enough to understand what emotion had drawn that confession from him. She shook her head.

"No," she said. "You think foolish. This is the house of good people. They give me a room since I worked at the Cantina Sol. I am not a golden-comb girl, Señor."

She stood back from the grating, her knuckles to her lips, as though pondering the wisdom of her words. Outside the man leaned his shoulder against the barrier, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Gina," he whispered at last, "don't you get mad at me. I didn't understand. This place . . . why don't you come away from it?"

"Señor, I tell you the place is no good, but San Benito—Santa Maria! what shall I do in San Benito? It is to New York I wish to go. To San Benito, now!" She grasped the bars. "You know, Señor, there is to be a new revolution? *Si!*"

"How you know?" He peered in at her, baffled yet determined to go on with this extraordinary experience. "To-night, I heard from that Señor Pelham . . ."

He stopped as she thrust her face close up to his own again. The expression she wore was a shock to him.

"Do not speak to me of that man," she whispered fiercely. "He is a snake."

"The colonel, he told me you didn't like Englishmen," he said. "He told me why."

"He tell you that? That I have a *nina?* Well, it is true. The German señor is right. But I do not hate that man because he is English. He is a snake. The girls of the town laugh and tell stories about him. He come to see them, knock at the window, two, three in the morning. He tell me he love me. I spit in his face. Not because he is English. Listen, Señor, my *nina*—the father is English. He is a devil, not a snake. He leave me with my baby. Perhaps never again I see him. I no want to see him, you understand. I love him, I hate him. Now for me it is the *nina.* I come here, but it is no good, this place.

I—what shall I say?—I must work for my *nina*. Can I go to New York and work, work, and have my *nina* too—you understand? To do that, Señor, I will . . ."

She put out one hand to touch him and pressed the other to her breast in a gesture of supplication.

"Listen, Gina, you say you love this fellow who did you dirt like that?"

"Señor, he was the first, you understand. He is a madman, a devil. Once I think he kill me. See!" she pulled her dress from her shoulder and pointed to a scar on her breast. "With a knife. Santa Maria! I fall down. Faustina, my friend in Havana, she send for coach to take me to hospital. They ask me, who did it? But I say nothing. He was drunk, you understand. It is nothing. Soon I am all right."

"And he cleared out—left you cold?"

"Señor, he was on a ship. What do I know? Perhaps he is dead. He was a devil. He must fight all the time. He was the first, you understand."

"Listen, Gina. If you meet him again, I suppose, eh . . . ?"

He looked eagerly through the bars of the window. One would have imagined him a prisoner gazing out upon the one person who had the power of release. She made a Latin gesture, a flick of the fingers downward. She was thinking, with a half-breathless look of smiling apprehension, of the man who had been a devil.

"No," she said. "That is all finished, I tell you. I want to leave this place, leave the ships and the coast. You understand?"

She gazed at him with a puzzled expression, as though she waited for him to give shape to her vaguely uttered thought.

"You want to begin all over again, Gina? That why you want to go to New York? Big city—plenty of work—nobody find you."

"*Si, si,*" she exclaimed softly. "To begin new—*de nuova!* Señor, for that I would give my life. All my life!" she repeated in a ringing tone. She seemed to be listening to the sound of the words she had just uttered, measuring their immense significance. She took a long breath. The discovery that he understood this secret craving of her heart, perceived it through the veil of her halting speech, made her suddenly conscious of the structure she had been building upon her hope, so often de-

stroyed by her failure to judge men. Intuition is for a woman a treacherous guide. Gina, looking through the bars at this man who wanted her, even after he knew what she was, remembered the time she had tried to make Colonel von Stücke see what she wanted. She had seen him, back there in the Cantina Sol, lighting a strong black cigar, his haggard bloodshot eyes sizing her up through the smoke. He had been amorous that evening, over his steins of beer, eloquent with hoarse *liebchens* and *"Ach! schöne Gina, liebst du mir?"* only a moment before. Sizing her up, he was; sputtering in incomprehensible German, chuckling and pinching her arm, while she slowly moved back out of his reach, hating herself for having been taken in by his rough fatherly ways.

She thought of this as she stood looking through the bars. A sudden panic seized her, lest even now Mr. Claxon's silence presaged a revulsion of feeling. She had never met men save as predatory seducers. She had no experience which might guide her in appealing to the decency in them. She was too unskilled to know that a man may not want to be encumbered with what is to him a useless fidelity. Her lover had knifed her and abandoned her and her baby. She remained motionless, while the words she had uttered hung between them.

And for him it was as though that moment, out of all the multi-coloured moments of the evening, burned with an intense brilliancy. The change in his own feelings was no less astonishing than the sudden knowledge that, for her own reasons, Gina wanted to do exactly what his mind had sketched as a dizzy felicity. He knew now that his scheme to take her to San Benito had been born of his doubts. It had been a swaggering gesture to impress her with his lordly ways. Now that he stood studying her face behind the bars, it seemed to him that he had no lordly ways. He was a man burdened with a woman's destiny. He heard her repeat the words he had used.

"Nobody find me!" she said. That, it seemed, was to her the greatest boon a man could bestow upon her. That was the service she asked in return for a life's allegiance—to obliterate her identity, to set her adrift in a maelstrom of humanity where she could come to the surface as a denizen of another world.

"Listen, Gina," he said, putting his lips close to the bars, those bars which were in her mind the symbol of her new status in the world. "Listen, if I fix it up, mind, you've got to drop

this comandante. You know what that fellow Pelham told me? —said I'd get a knife in the ribs if I come round you. Well, I don't want a knife in the ribs. I've got business up in San Benito, and if I don't get through my business there'll be no New York for either of us. Got to get this straight, Gina. You understand?"

"What you think? You think I care about that comandante, that costeno? If I take his house, the Casa Bellavista, I am finished! I know! Perhaps I get money. *Si,* but money is no good in this place. I tell you. Soon this comandante will be finished. Some other—there is a captain at Rio Taga. He was sent there because General Martinez needed the post of San Paulo for his brother. Now General Martinez is in Las Esmeraldas, and if we have the revolution the captain will come up from Rio Taga."

"How do you know all this, Gina?"

"How do I know the moon is in the sky? Because I can see it. No, I would be foolish to go to the Casa Bellavista. But I tell you, Señor, that I can make the comandante and those others think I will do that, if you tell me. It will be better."

"You think the revolution come quick?"

"Señor, they are at Caravosa." She made a motion over her shoulder and dropped her voice even lower. "Señor Ugarte has seen the mules going up. They are on the Camino Real to Ortygia. The army is camped there."

"But, by golly, Gina, I've got to get up to San Paulo, anyhow."

"Yes, you will go," she said as though to herself. "Señor, they say in San Paulo that the insurrectos will not go to San Benito this time, but to Puerto Balboa."

"What's that for, Gina?"

"What do I know? They say it is to destroy the *ferrocarril.* The mozos and *llaneros* of the Camagua Valley think the *ferrocarril* brings death to the cattle. Sometimes the cattle are killed on the line. The officials who are making the *ferrocarril* make trouble with the men on the *fincas.* What do I know? It is first one and then the other." She raised and lowered her hands. "For me it is nothing. I will go away."

"You will come with me, Gina? You will be straight with me?"

"Look, Señor!"

She put her hand into her bosom and drew up from between

her breasts a thin rectangular locket. Slowly she passed it through the bars to him, leaning forward as far as possible.

He took it in his fingers, turning the smooth pellet to the moonlight, but he could not make out the face in the circle. She held it for him while he struck one of the tiny wax vestas that pass for matches in Costaragua. As the flame spurted and burned in the shelter of his hand he saw it. It startled him because the face of the child, with her thin cheeks and strongly marked brows, looking out from between the narrow edges of the locket, was strangely like the face close to his own between the bars of the window. It was very like her, but there lay in the implacable black eyes of the picture a hint of sleeping furies. They were not Gina's eyes, and he had a queer feeling in his breast as he blew out the match and gave her the locket.

"Giovanna," she said, putting it back into her bosom. "Now everything for Giovanna."

He looked at her steadfastly, perceiving under the halting inadequate words a pledge of fidelity to himself, if he served that desperate desire to take care of Giovanna. And Mr. Claxon, who had moved about the world for a number of years with an easy pride in his freedom, yet with an undercurrent of puzzled wonder that he was not happy, comprehended that a new experience was being offered him. He would have to grapple with life indeed if he wanted Gina. There would be no shifting of responsibility upon society. They would be dependent upon one another to an extent beyond the belief of people living the smooth community life at home. In New York it might succeed. But even in New York it would flex every sinew of his character. And yet, strangely enough to himself, he took quick defiant glances at the future, breathing hard, as he grasped the forbidding bars of that window in the Calle Potosí, he had no intention of evading it. It seemed to him indeed that this woman was offering him a way of escape from the drab and somewhat dreary circle of his days. The bars between them were a symbol to him also, of the barriers of fate and the narrowing perspective of the years.

"Gina!" he said, and he reached through to bring her face close to his own once more. As he looked into her eyes, even as he brushed her cheek with his lips, he was aware of that quality in her personality which entranced and defied him, which held him prisoner yet kept him always just outside the inner sanctuary of her heart. It was there as he held her, like the bars

of the window, a symbol of her escape from her past, a pledge of her integrity. "Gina!"

As he saw those perfectly moulded lips, which seemed to express endurance and scorn of the unmerited sufferings of her life, breathe some words in his ear and soften, as she gazed at him, to a faint derisive smile.

"Gina," he said again quickly. "You mean that? It is true?"

"*Si,*" she said. "It is true, *querido.*"

CHAPTER IV

MR. CLAXON often spoke to Gina in after times of the accident which took him down on the jetty that night in Puerto Balboa instead of back to the Pension Francia to sleep. He got no sleep that night.

"I didn't know where I was going," he would say. "Went right down through the Plaza, down to the Custom House. Ought to have turned to the left to get to the hotel on the front, you understand," he would add if a stranger were present. "And all of a sudden I found the wooden jetty under my feet. And then I thought I might as well have a bit of breeze and went on out to the dock."

What he saw, when he stepped upon the long narrow jetty whose rugged piles were crusted into great black boles with marine growth, was a steamer.

"I thought it was the *Santa Brigida,*" he would say, "but it was too small even for her. And this boat had only one mast."

She was coming in from the eastward, and this would have told a seaman she was very light draft. Between Strikers Cay and the Tortugas River was shoal water. Only a pilot familiar with the coast could have brought that steamer in by that route. Mr. Claxon, as he reached the outer end of the jetty, where it widened to take the crane and the harbourmaster's office, sat down on one of the great timbers and watched her. If he had any thoughts about her at all, he said afterward, it was that she had no lights. Neither mast-head nor side lights. But it was as light as day. She was a mile off, and he could see her as plain as the nose on one's face. It was only later that he made out the gun on her fore deck, however, because the canvas cover blended with the other deck gear. He heard the rattle of her anchor chain as it ran out, first very fast and then slower and slower as she flung up foam and went astern. Before this manœuvre was half completed, before the windlass—which sent out jets of white steam through a port, like the smoke of guns in old-fashioned warships—had come to rest, a boat had been plopped into the water, men had tumbled in and taken the oars, and then two other persons swung down a rope and sat in the stern.

All this he saw, and still his thoughts were absorbed in the experiences of the night. Even as the boat, with four oarsmen pulling with quick short strokes rapidly approached the dock on which he was sitting, Mr. Claxon remembers that he was thinking that he could sleep in the train on the way up to San Paulo. He had already made up his mind to that even though a cable came from New York. He would go to San Paulo and engage the best *avocado* in the city. He would send another cable explaining this step and asking for authority to take all the necessary steps to have the concession confirmed. Next week it might be too late, if what that Señor Pelham said was true. And suppose, he was saying to himself, suppose Gina's information was correct and the revolutionaries smashed the railway? Suppose they came, as she said they might, to Puerto Balboa and shut him up in San Paulo.

It was just as he was reflecting in this fashion, he was accustomed to relate, that the boat came alongside of where he sat, four oars rose and fell with a clatter, he heard the sharp peremptory order *"Desarma!"* and a head and shoulders followed a pair of olive-tinted hands up a set of iron rungs let into the piles. And then he looked down into an upturned olive face, with a short neatly kept moustache as black as jet, a set of white even teeth holding a cigarette, and a pair of aggressive black eyes. Only when the owner of this face had clambered over the bulk on which Mr. Claxon was sitting and the latter saw the heavy revolver strapped to the gentleman's body did he devote all his mind to the arrival of the steamer. He committed a characteristic act. He rose to his feet as though he were about to make an address. He then saw that the other five occupants of the boat were coming up. Two of the boatmen were climbing independent of the ladder. If he were about to make a speech he now had an audience.

He heard the young man, who had first landed, give a sharp order in Spanish. He saw the men, who all had heavy service revolvers in leather holsters, step on either side of him. And then the young man who wore a vague uniform ending in cashmere trousers and patent leather dancing shoes spoke to him.

"What's the game?" asked Mr. Claxon. He could not remember the Spanish phrase that he wanted. He had a sudden exaggerated idea of the length of the jetty. The few lighted windows of the town seemed far off. He felt as if he were alone

on a raft with these men. The sea rose among the piles and sank again with confused hollow plashing.

"Eh?" said the young man briskly, stepping up close. The other young man, who looked like a handsome college boy, said something.

"*Si*," said the other, examining Mr. Claxon as though he were a piece of sculpture in a museum. "A gringo. What are you doing here," he demanded, "at this time of the night?"

"Well, since you put it that way," said Mr. Claxon, feeling for a cigar, "what are you doing here at this time of night? It's easier for me to answer than you, I guess," he went on, finding a couple in his vest pocket. He offered one to the young man, who looked at it and at him and back again to the cigar again. "I'm getting a breath of fresh air before going back to the hotel," added Mr. Claxon. He bit the end off his cigar.

The young man, as though the information were of no interest to him at all, turned to his companion, who had lighted a cigarette. For a moment they conversed, and then the latter, with a smiling gesture, indicated to Mr. Claxon that he was to descend to the boat.

"You had better come back to the ship with me," he said in English so clearly articulated that it proclaimed him a Latin. "Captain Bustillo gives the order."

"See here, my young friend, what's in the wind?" demanded Mr. Claxon, going up to the speaker.

"He will tell you on the ship," said Captain Bustillo harshly. "Descend, if you please, at once. Luiz, Rafael, *guardase la escollera!*" He returned to his companion and spoke rapidly.

Mr. Claxon, as he made a clumsy descent into a boat that was rising and falling with a ponderous rhythm, discovered that he was no longer thinking egocentrically. He seemed, indeed, to be no longer thinking at all. The Pension Francia, the Las Esmeraldas Concession, the Hispaniola Syndicate, even Gina, seemed to have faded into slightly improbable legends before the powerful strident voice of the young man whose name was Captain Bustillo. The other young man, stepping gracefully into the boat as it rose on the smooth gigantic swell, took up a pair of oars and smilingly inclined his head toward the others. Mr. Claxon took them up with an air of not committing himself. He slipped the rope rings over the thole pins and sat down. He caught several crabs before he was able to keep time with the lithe and slender yet extremely muscular young gentleman. He

found a conviction taking shape in his mind that the interminable conversations, hints, rumours, and foreshadowings which had been befogging his brain ever since he set foot in Costaragua had suddenly crystallized into the form of that young man standing on the jetty. The boat was moving rapidly toward the ship. He saw Captain Bustillo go to the staircase and climb to the gallery on the roof of the harbour master's office. There was a flagstaff there. He said to himself that this was a revolution. That perhaps was the basis of this extraordinary notion of kidnapping an American citizen at two o'clock in the morning. But where did this lot come from? He looked at the plunging shoulder muscles of the young man in front of him, as though perhaps he could divine the origin of so much energy and consummate generalship. Now that he recalled the entry of this small vessel, the rapid approach, the anchoring, the precipitate yet efficient launch of the boat even as the ship came up on her cable, the landing and his own incredible arrest, he became aware of a plan in the whole transaction. He thought. As the boat came under the counter of the vessel he saw the name *La Sirena* in white letters and beneath it the words "Rio Taga." And there shot through his mind the words of Gina, who had spoken of an officer down the coast at Rio Taga, who had been displaced to make room for a brother of General Martinez.

The *Sirena* was small. As Mr. Claxon stood up to hold the boat alongside while a sailor—who looked like a buccaneer—made the painter fast, his head was on a level with the top of the accommodation ladder. He caught a strong whiff of garlic from the sailor. The latter stood away to make room for the captain, who had the air, in his shabby frogged tunic and peaked cap, his rich moustache and heavy gold ring with an emerald like a piece of cheap glass in it, of a lion tamer out of employment. He even carried out the illusion by carrying a fly whisk made of horsehair with which he lashed methodically at the mosquitoes. This personage, ignoring Mr. Claxon entirely, spoke rapidly to the young man. Mr. Claxon heard him address that individual as "Don Carlos," and the romantic syllables made him more than ever convinced that the real world had slipped from his grasp. He was in his bed at the Pension Francia asleep and would wake up presently to discover that whisky, beer, and aguardiente brought on incredible dreams.

He could not make out just what they were saying, but the word *amarradero* came to him, harsh, peremptory, and intelli-

gible. He knew that word. They were going alongside, then. What defeated him was the brisk indifference of these men to his own personality. So far as they were concerned he had no personality. They looked past him. They were apparently carrying out a desperate enterprise, and the impression they made upon Mr. Claxon, without uttering a word on the subject, was that his existence, alive or dead, was of absolutely no importance whatever. He was aware of a disconcertingly inexorable quality in this smiling young man, who was called Don Carlos, as he stood exchanging rapid words with the captain of the *Sirena*. The grotesque warning of Señor Pelham, concerning a possible knife in the back, seemed conventional and modest now. Captain Bustillo, who was now on the roof of the harbour master's office, was much more suggestive of a firing squad. That briskness of his sent a chill down Mr. Claxon's back. He recognized it. It was a characteristic of men who act by virtue of their own powers. He had seen it in San Domingo. He had had the chill more than once. He kept quite still. His cigar had gone out, and he felt in his pocket for the matches. Somehow, he could not find them. The young man walked forward with the captain, yet Mr. Claxon was aware of no release from the peculiar anxiety which now assailed him. The young man left the captain at the door of the chart room and came aft again. He motioned to Mr. Claxon to descend to the cabin.

As he did so, twisting his body to get round the turn of the companionway and holding on by grasping the sliding scuttle, Mr. Claxon was sharply aware of the ease with which he could be disposed of. In the cabin, which was small, and nearly filled with a table of unpolished mahogany, he turned to meet Don Carlos.

"Take a seat," said that young man, and he took one himself. He was dark, and his sallow face with the big mobile lips indicated that he was a Costaraguan, yet his eyes evoked other impressions. They were dark but not the fathomless black of Captain Bustillo's, for example. They were of a smoky hazel. His movements were like those of an athlete. He had dropped to his feet in front of Mr. Claxon as lightly as a cat. His attitudes were unstudied yet extraordinarily graceful.

"You speak English, I noticed," said Mr. Claxon.

"Of course," was the reply. "My father was not English, but he lived many years in that country. You are American, eh? Well, that is all right. What can I do for you?"

Mr. Claxon looked at him across the table. The side scuttles were open, and a breeze came in on long wind scoops thrust through them. He looked at the young man without arriving at any coherent ideas concerning him.

"I am American too," added the young man with his large lips parted in a smile that revealed magnificent teeth. "Latin American."

"What can you do for me?" repeated Mr. Claxon. "What should you do for me? How can I answer a question like that when I don't know who you are? You've sprung out of the bottom of the sea, so far as I can make out."

"Not quite that. From Rio Taga, which is just above the surface of the sea. Captain Bustillo was the comandante of Rio Taga. He has resigned."

"Oh, I see. He's resigned. Got a better position."

The young man laughed and offered his cigarette case, which was of tortoise shell bound with gold.

"That we shall see. But you will suffer no harm. We are arrived a little too quick. We shall, however, occupy the town."

"What, you chaps alone?"

"Sixteen altogether, and two machine guns," smiled the young man. "We have the jetty already. And we have also a six-pounder on deck here. Unfortunately . . ." He looked reflectively at Mr. Claxon, but did not mention the misfortune. "We shall do all right," he said. "Our side is ready to strike."

"What side are you on?" demanded Mr. Claxon. "I'm a business man and only know what I hear."

"An American business man," corrected the young man, blowing smoke. "Well, we are the friends of business men who come here to do business to sell goods and buy our crops. But we are the enemies of all foreign concessions. Costaragua is not for sale, you understand. We are about to elect a government which will cancel all concessions. Only in that way can we recover the country for its citizens."

"What about the railway?" asked Mr. Claxon.

"That will be taken over by the government," replied Don Carlos with a wave of the hand.

"Who's going to do all this—Captain Bustillo?" inquired Mr. Claxon. Don Carlos looked up and shook his head slowly.

"The Army of Liberation is proceeding north in a few hours," he said. "Tell me," he went on. "Have you had no steamer here in Puerto Balboa?"

"Not since yesterday," said Mr. Claxon. "I came down the night before. Only the *Santa Brigida,* of course."

"No big ship, no *navio de carga?* Well, there is some miscalculation."

"What ship do you expect?"

"A ship. That is all. Now, for yourself, you are safe, Señor Americano, if you make no attempt to hold communication with the town. In a few minutes we go alongside. Perhaps in half an hour. Captain Bustillo will fire a shot."

"What is he doing?" asked Mr. Claxon.

"He is making a name for himself," laughed Don Carlos. "Calling on the comandante of Puerto Balboa, who will be very surprised to see him."

"I'll say he will," agreed Mr. Claxon, thinking of the thick black-moustached billiard player. "And the chief of customs, too."

"Yes, and the chief of police," added Don Carlos. "They are the puppets of the governor of the department."

"What about him?" remarked Mr. Claxon. "I don't believe I've ever heard of him."

"The governor of the San Paulo Department? No, perhaps you have not heard of him. He lives at San Paulo. He is rich. He makes enormous money from the people of the department. He makes money from everybody. These men are his agents, you understand."

"I heard something about this move," said Mr. Claxon. Don Carlos Almanzor, who used only his mother's name, out of patriotism, looked at his prisoner sharply.

"From what person did you hear something?" he inquired at once.

Mr. Claxon deliberated a moment. He was not disposed to bring Gina into this.

"Some fellow talking in the Cantina Sol," he replied. "I didn't pay much attention. What are you in all this?" he asked. "I suppose you'll get a position in the new government."

Don Carlos shrugged his shoulders. He looked suddenly much older as his smile died away.

"I have my own affairs," he said coldly. "You are quite sure you have seen no ship, heard nothing of any ship? She should be arrived."

"Not a thing, s'far as I know," said Mr. Claxon. He leaned his elbows on the table. "You see, Señor Don Carlos, the

trouble about you is this: you want to know so much but you don't tell enough to make it worth while."

"You wish to know what I am doing?" said the young man with extraordinary vivacity. "I can tell you. I am here to take what is mine from the thief who stole from me." He threw himself back on the plush cushions of the cuddy. "What would you say if you possessed someone—something you loved, and a thief, a rich *caballero,* but a thief just the same, a *ladron,* took it away from you because the law, the infamous law of the old Constitution, gave him a right. What would you do in a case like that, Señor Americano?"

Mr. Claxon rolled his cigar in his mouth. He was very tired. His mouth was dry. He reached up to a carafe on a rack on the bulkhead and poured himself a glass of water. It was warm, and he rose to spit it through the porthole.

"I can answer that one," he remarked as he set the bottle back in its place. "I'll ask another first. How would you feel if you'd paid money for a concession and some politicos came along and took it away from you because a law of the old Constitution gave them the right to refuse a renewal?"

Don Carlos Almanzor looked up.

"You are a concessionaire?" he queried. Mr. Claxon nodded slowly several times, the corners of his mouth drawn down, his prominent eyes fixed on his questioner.

"What are you going to do about it?" he said. "What about your credit with the banks when you cancel concessions and confiscate the railway? What do you plan to do to get your property back?"

"My property? It is a girl," the young man said in a low dispirited tone.

"She's not in Puerto Balboa?" suggested Mr. Claxon, a queer feeling assailing him. Don Carlos Almanzor shook his head.

"The ship, the ship!" he muttered.

"Is she in love with you?" Mr. Claxon asked sympathetically.

"How is it possible?" came the answer in a high falsetto whisper, and Don Carlos, staring at the table, gnawed his knuckles for a moment.

"Enough!" he said abruptly, turning sideways and contemplating the panelling. "When the ship arrives, all these matters will be settled in the Costaraguan way."

"How's that?" inquired Mr. Claxon curiously.

The answer, as the young man drew in his breath before speak-

ing, was the sharp crack of Captain Bustillo's revolver on shore. Don Carlos looked at Mr. Claxon and made a gesture.

"You will see," he said, rising. "That means the ship has not been seen. We go to the dock."

He looked out through the porthole. The *Sirena* shook violently as the anchor came up. The head of the sailor suddenly appeared at the little skylight over the table. Don Carlos gave him a signal.

"*Si,*" he said. "I come."

"Just a minute," remarked Mr. Claxon, putting up his hand. "I told you I represented a concession. You still feel the same about me?"

"Señor Americano, your concession is worth nothing. What is your concession?"

"Las Esmeraldas," said Mr. Claxon. "And if you think the United States is going to . . ."

"*Quien sabe?* Just now it is worth nothing. I advise you to keep quiet for a little."

"I dare say that's what your friend on the ship will suggest to you about your lady friend," said Mr. Claxon coolly. "You," he went on as the young man turned at the stairway, "are not the only man with a girl, Señor Don Carlos."

"You?" said the other. "Here?"

Mr. Claxon nodded slowly.

"Here in this town," he remarked, and drummed with his fingers on the table.

Don Carlos took a step up and paused again.

"Then my advice to you, Señor Americano, is to join the party of the patriots. I—" he tapped himself on the chest—"will speak in your favour to General Gonzalez."

He paused, as though trying to get used to the extraordinary fact that this partially bald gringo with the gaping mouth and small opaque eyes had a girl. It was almost as though he expected some magic change to take place in Mr. Claxon's appearance to justify such a preposterous state of affairs. A girl! What girl, he wondered, would look at such a *patan?*

"Señor," he said suddenly, "who is the girl?"

"That's my business," muttered Mr. Claxon in a thick voice.

"Certainly," agreed Don Carlos, keeping his eyes on the other man. "Your business. You think of nothing but business, you Americanos. You think the whole world is created for your business. But do you imagine that you can keep a secret like

that? When General Gonzalez enters Puerto Balboa you will be under martial law. All foreigners must report to the general's headquarters. I take it on myself to speak in your favour."

"What's the idea of that?" asked Mr. Claxon.

"Aha! You ask what is the idea? Well, the idea is that you will carry out our instructions." He took a paper from his pocket. "This is a pronunciamento for the alcalde, who will have it printed and posted up outside the cabildo."

Mr. Claxon looked casually at the document and put it in his pocket.

"Suppose I don't fancy carrying out your instructions," he said. "Suppose I don't believe all you say."

The young man turned back from the stairway again.

"In that case, Señor, you will certainly not see your girl again." He laughed suddenly. *"Por Dios!* She will be a widow. She will be consoled by one of the general's *llaneros* from Camagua. Have you ever seen those men from the ranchos, Señor? They sleep in their blankets; never under a roof. Their meat is uncooked. They carry it under their saddles, where the sweat of the horse salts it and the riding makes it tender. And they drink black wine out of bottles of hogskin. They will carry your girl back to their valley. Their women will make her work in the fields. What do you think, Señor? Are you incorruptible?"

Mr. Claxon was startled by the curiously naïve quality of the question. Was he? He realized that he had never settled the matter. He had believed in his own theoretical integrity without ever conducting an absolute test. Was he? What would he lose if he accepted this young revolutionary's overtures? Suppose the government was defeated and this young man became possessed of political influence? The question of Gina was bound up in this. He wished he could hear what she would advise. She would be able to help him in a case like this. Involuntarily he glanced up at the young man whose Latin intuition had driven that thin sharp interrogation into a vital spot in his mind. Don Carlos was watching him keenly. Mr. Claxon saw him extend his hand and rub thumb and forefinger against each other gently.

"It is the chance of a lifetime," he said, and ran up the ladder.

Mr. Claxon wondered. He had often tried to imagine the

chance of a lifetime coming to him, with a view to familiarizing himself with its appearance. But he had failed. The sort of chances he liked to imagine were too fabulous to be convincing. They concerned the acquisition of millions. Now his mind was moving quickly to and fro, estimating the actual possibilities of this chance. He had sense enough to know that unless he were clever the chance would be worth nothing. And his conception of cleverness, to clean up and clear out, implied that he would look after number one first. He said to himself.

"I'll have to cable."

It occurred to him that quite possibly cabling was a thing of the past. If it were true that these bands of cutthroats from the cattle lands had been roused by cunning propaganda and hopes of loot to attack the railway and coast towns, with this young lunatic coming in from sea to aid them, what chance was there of sending a cable? And suppose he obtained power of attorney to sell the concession to a Costaraguan company which he himself would promote, what possible guarantees could he extract from such a crowd? He might make himself rich on paper, but where was the backing to come from for a new revolutionary government? What about the million pesos of Costaragua Sevens which the Hispaniola Syndicate held? What of the other millions held in London? Was there any chance at all of such an enterprise succeeding? To Mr. Claxon, shut up in the hot little cabin of the *Sirena,* listening to the orders being given on deck, the problems were much more immediate. He must get out and find Gina. He must see if the telegraph office had been interfered with. He must find the state of mind of the people in the Pension Francia. And above all he was desirous of a word with Colonel von Stücke.

A man like Reid B. Claxon, who has lived an essentially selfish existence in a highly artificial civilization, a civilization in which the army and navy and police, concealed behind a docile public opinion, protect him from the elemental lusts of humanity, can never quite divest himself of a conviction that the Latin-American character is hollow. Mr. Claxon, relying on his experience of life, was inclined to suspect that the arrival of the *Sirena* was more in the nature of an independent filibuster than a carefully planned coöperation. He did not believe, as he sat in that cabin, stripped of his coat, vest, and collar, that General Gonzales was actually on the march from the Camagua Valley. It would be impossible for such an operation to be carried out unknown to

Puerto Balboa unless the wires had been cut. No, he did not believe it. He admired that young squirt, though! He even admired Captain Bustillo, who had calmly raided the houses of the comandante, the chief of police, and the chief of customs and locked them up. So Don Carlos had said. But the more the American examined the whole business the more obvious it became that it was a plan arrived at independently by these two men from Rio Taga. Private vengeance in each case. Bustillo proposed to make a stroke in Puerto Balboa which would impress the Camaguistas, while Don Carlos. . . . Now there, thought Mr. Claxon, was something that would clear up a lot. What the *Sirena* had come to find was not an army from San Paulo, but a ship. And on the ship was a girl. Mr. Claxon suddenly struck the table with his fist.

"There it is!" he said to himself.

CHAPTER V

THE consular agent, Mr. C. H. B. Leake, was an Englishman, as sometimes happens in small and unimportant places. He was an importer, an agent for a number of old-established firms of outstanding excellence and high price. He had an office and showroom on the Calle del Mar, a one-story affair containing a great many samples of machinery, pumps, and so forth, and over the door were fastened the almost illegible insignia of the United States, Great Britain, and, for some reason or other, Sweden. Mr. Leake's consular duties were not arduous. He lived by himself in a house of extensive verandas and overhanging eaves on the hill behind the town; and it was he alone who saw, across the roof of the church of Puerto Balboa and the intervening houses, the *guardacosta Sirena* steaming across the bay beyond the mouth of the Tortuga River, the smoke from her funnel drifting into a transparent haze above the white mists which lay over the shallows and swamps of the delta.

Mr. Leake, who slept on his veranda during the hot hours of the day and who rode across the railway to the north beach at a very early hour for his morning dip, often suffered from insomnia. For this he had two remedies. He was a great reader of modern novels, generally by women, which treated of life in English country houses and the southwestern suburbs of London. Mr. Leake was one of those men, with excellent mental equipment, to whom one novel is exactly the same as another. What he wanted was the story adequately presented in well-bred English. These books passed the time and served to distract his mind.

He also had a hobby, but he never allowed it to dominate his life or become a subject for general conversation. Francis Striker was the only person aware of his project, which was a history of Costaragua, the manners and customs of the people. Mr. Leake had much more information on this subject than most people suspected. He lived very privately, and the merchants of Puerto Balboa, the coffee farmers to whom

he sold hardware, machinery, and plumbing fixtures—which latter were often put to unexpected uses—respected him without knowing much about him. The wife of the English caballero had gone home long ago. Occasionally they could be induced to mention the story. Señora Leake had not cared for Costaragua—no. The señora never learned Spanish and did not feel *simpatica* toward the Costaraguan ladies. The climate affected the señora's health, and she went to Europe to consult specialists. And did not return. *Si,* she was, they understood, living in Europe.

This bald, and accurate, account covered Mr. Leake's private trouble. To a man of his disposition, it would have been highly indecorous to have the people of Puerto Balboa chattering about his affairs. Gradually, it was no longer discussed. Even Señora Munn, talking to Mr. Claxon, had not thought to mention that other señora who had regarded the whole community with querulous disdain. Mr. Leake, living with his servants, a costeno and his Indian wife, was able to test the truth of the Ovidian tag about time devouring all things.

Mr. Leake's private life is not of paramount importance save as it affected his character and habits. If he had not been worried about his wife he would not have suffered from insomnia, and he would not have been the first to see the *Sirena* a good half hour before she astonished Mr. Claxon. As consular agent and merchant, as the quiet secluded student of Costaraguan life, and as the strong silent supporter of the Striker-Perkins interests, Mr. Leake was the focus of innumerable independent lines of information. The *Sirena,* for example, the last time she was in Puerto Balboa, had sent in a requisition. The chief of the customs had come into Mr. Leake's showroom with the order for some valves and gaskets. He had distinctly remarked that the *Sirena* would lie at Rio Taga for a month and they would have ample time to do the work there. Rio Taga was a frontier port and the only place where any smuggling was done with the next republic. And yet here was the *Sirena* coming in, at a strange hour, only a week later. Mr. Leake also knew Captain Bustillo's grievance against the war minister. Captain Bustillo had been very comfortable as comandante at San Paulo. Mr. Leake knew how that breaker of hearts enjoyed a dump like Rio Taga, where the only woman who wore shoes was the fat German wife of the Chilean storekeeper. Captain Bustillo had taken to alligator shooting and had bought a rifle and ammunition from Leake & Co.

There were other items of news even more important than the

movements of the *Sirena*. The steamer *Candleshoe* was bringing out a consignment of laundry machinery for San Benito, where Colonel von Stücke, director general of the Scuola Militare, had gone into partnership with Venustiano Alvarado, a clerk in the Ministry of Haciendas. This Alvarado was some sort of collateral relative, not very capable, of the old Don Orlando Perkins, the original concessionaire for the railway. He was one of the present Orlando's henchmen, a small, elderly, extremely discreet creature with a gray imperial and broad-ribboned pince-nez. A nonenity. He looked like a cross between a stage diplomat and an actor out of employment. The idea of Von Stücke selecting him for a partner in a business venture was intriguing. And a laundry. When the order came to Mr. Leake he was surprised to find that the specification called for German-made machines in nearly every case. He had said nothing. He made his 10 per cent. plus 2½ for cash in sixty days. He merely wondered. Now the *Candleshoe* was about due, he was not surprised to see Colonel von Stücke in Puerto Balboa. But he did not abandon his attitude of conjecture. He could not believe in Señor Venustiano Alvarado as the administrador of a laundry.

There was also Don Orlando himself. Mr. Leake knew all about him. For ten years he had watched that trucculent, handsome, clever cosmopolitan come and go. He admired him and envied the ease with which he subjugated everything and everybody, men and women, to his convenience. Only lately had there become evident in San Benito a party among the younger conservatives who stood up to him in the Senate, who wrote flaming and very ridiculous diatribes against him in *El Mundo*. There was, especially, that young firebrand Don Carlos Almanzor, son of Louis Chaillu, one of the Striker-Perkins partners, a young Frenchman who had been killed in the revolutions, and whose shares had been purchased by Don Francisco. Don Carlos had been jailed not long ago, and Mr. Leake, who was familiar with Costaraguan history and politics, had his own opinion about that. When the Almanzors, his mother's family, filled the president's anterooms and Don Carlos was released, he vanished from the plateau. Mr. Leake had not failed to hear the rumours that Don Orlando's motives in that business were not entirely political. A week or so later Don Orlando arrived from the capital with his ward, Señorita Yolanda de Mara, bound for New Orleans and New York.

The house of the consular agent was set back on the hillside. The upper floor gave on to a wide veranda built over the entrance hall. At the back a broad flight of stairs came down into that hall, which extended the whole width of the house. Mr. Leake had spent years planning this house in which Mrs. Leake had lived six months. It was as English as Señora Munn's private apartments, but of another era. It reflected the England of country houses, of shooting parties and hunting meets. There were broad leather settees, mounted game heads and the varnished skin of a twelve-foot alligator Mr. Leake had shot on the lower reaches of the Corcubion delta. There were chesterfields in oiled chintz and oriental rugs. The mahogany flooring, waxed and polished, reflected the mellow light of reading lamps on rosewood tables. Along the rear, in its pale shroud of oilcloth, stood a billiard table.

On the veranda above Mr. Leake had a table and chair and a revolving case of books. Here he sat on sleepless nights and made notes for his slowly growing history of Costaragua. Without making a noise about it, Mr. Leake was as convinced as Don Francisco, or even the Hispaniola Syndicate, of the enormous potential wealth of the country. But he did not write from the point of view of the native patriot. It would have been impossible. He was convinced that the republican form of government was the worst in the world, and unconsciously his chapters revealed this faint bias. It seemed to him that Costaragua, since the War of Independence, had been no more than a severed limb. Without the vitality of the mother country it had died. All he saw now was the repulsive transformations of corruption.

He had written:

> The longer one lives among the Costaraguans, the more one realizes the insurmountable barrier which separates us from them. It is not only a question of race and of religion; it is a question of mental development in matters political, civil, and intellectual. The Costaraguan, whether he be the proprietor of vast cattle ranches, a member of the first families who live in the magnificent casas of the old streets of San Benito, or a costeno who has never worn shoes in his life and who lives in a palmleaf hut on the shores of the Corcubion, is the same insoluble problem. He has done nothing and will do nothing. He lives on the achievements of colonial days, and in his eagerness to snatch at the phantom of a political utopia he loses the reality of . . .

Mr. Leake, pausing to devise some elegant conclusion to this sentence, got up and took a turn to and fro beyond the circle of

light thrown by his student lamp with its emerald-green shade. Across the roofs of the town he could see the ocean, an apparently flat, dark surface which he knew was in ceaseless motion. Below the line of palms on the beach the surf pounded. It was in general a deserted ocean that he contemplated. The fishermen kept close in shore along the delta of the Tortuga: the light on Strikers' Cay was not visible from his house.

". . . he loses the reality of——"

He paused in his walk. He was in pale saffron pajamas and old pumps. His moustache curled naturally beneath a thin delicate nose. As a rule he had a touch of red on each cheek bone. It gave him a faintly womanish appearance. Now, as he stood looking intently, the lamplight showed up his tall, slender figure, his long, elegant neck, and the back of his head, which ran straight up. It was this view of him which had finally got on the nerves of Mrs. Leake. In Mr. Leake ran a vein of silent, mulish, intellectual obstinacy. It was symbolized in that straight up-and-down back of his head. It was expressed by his entire understanding of the other person's unfortunate point of view. The red spots on his cheek bones became a little more brilliant, and his thin nose a little sharper along the keel. He gave an impression that he was suffering mental agony, but he was not suffering; he was too sure he was in the right. It was the other person—his wife—who suffered.

He stood looking intently. The *Sirena,* appearing to roll much more violently than in reality, was pouring out a dense black stream of smoke as she rode broadside to the oncoming swell of the Caribbean. Mr. Leake walked to the corner of his veranda and took the canvas cover from a telescope on a tripod. There was a thin mattress rolled up near it, which he used to lie upon when he contemplated the heavenly bodies, as though he were seeking another world in which to cut a more satisfactory figure. This mattress he did not now disturb. He drew his chair away from the table and sat down to inspect the *Sirena.*

Mr. Leake's married life had been a failure because he had designed it to the specifications of a romantic idealism. He not only imagined his wife to be something utterly different from what she was, he was quite mistaken about himself. He believed, under the influence of his love for his wife, that he wanted to be a married man. As a matter of fact, there was nothing he disliked so much as sharing either his joys or his sorrows with another person. He thought of himself, when under this romantic

illusion, as the ideal mate. He understood so much. He had infinite patience. What he failed to perceive was that in marriage perfection of character is not enough. Convinced that Adela was the ideal Englishman's wife, with sound views on carrying their country's Kultur into the dark places of the earth, the discovery that she hated the dark places of the earth and the people who lived in them struck him dumb. He was so incredulous of her reluctance to meet the ladies of Costaragua that he willingly accepted her declaration that she was sick and needed European skill to disguise the trouble. And when she went home he was still under that illusion. He saw her as the victim of the inexorable tropics which take their toll of heroic women.

That was years ago. He comprehended now that Adela had never had any intention of returning. Her people were wealthy, and after a year or two she wrote to say that they would make a position for him in England if he would give up Costaragua and come home "to a civilized country," as she put it. That was her stipulation.

He had remained. That silent, unobtrusive obstinacy which had rowelled her spirit acted to preserve him in the course he had taken. He had remained, and received her permission to go his way "while I go mine." He was one of those men who will endure the most excruciating mental agony and unhappiness for the sake of being morally correct. Love will sometimes disintegrate, in the fires of affliction, into its constituents of egotism and cruelty. Celibacy may be only a disguise for cowardice.

He became more than ever convinced that the *Sirena* was on some unusual errand. She was now approaching the unlighted channel between the shore and the eastern end of Strikers' Cay. He wondered whether Captain Bustillo, to whom the exile of Rio Taga was insupportable, had commandeered the *Sirena* for a few days jamboree in Puerto Balboa. There was a disturbing probability about such a guess and its implications. Bustillo had never done such a thing before, it is true. He had sometimes turned up in a *lancha*. But what was to prevent him, in that lonely place, from doing as he pleased?

The train of thought fitted in with Mr. Leake's recent observations. He had been at a loss to explain to his suspicious, jealous mind the atmosphere of subtle attentiveness in the town. Two of his men, moving a machine into a fresh position in accordance with his instructions, had suddenly laughed out loud

as he reëntered the office. His *maquinista,* coming in from a two-day trip on his mule to repair a cane mill on the banks of Lake Cristobal, seemed to watch his employer with eyes from which scales had fallen. That was Mr. Leake's simile. The gestures of the men who loafed about the jetty when the *Santa Brigida* was in port, the intensity of the confabulations at street corners, the groups at the table under the arcade in front of the Cantina Sol, were all parts of this confused impression in Mr. Leake's mind that something was up. He had even been tempted to converse with his *maquinista* about the health of the owner of the hacienda, which lay on the mule trail from Cordoba to Rio Taga.

No, he had not entertained the idea, of giving up Costaragua and returning to England, for a moment. He had not realized previously how intensely he felt about it. It was impossible. As he adjusted the telescope slightly be was more certain than ever that it was impossible. His life, such as it was, his interests and illusions, for that matter, were part of Costaragua. Without for a single instant conceiving himself a citizen of the republic, he was more closely attached to the country than Colonel von Stücke, for example, or Señor Barrillo, that discreet innkeeper whose customers included all the free-thinking machinists and workmen in Puerto Balboa. Mr. Leake believed privately that Barrillo was a government spy. Patriotism, love of country, was a very peculiar sentiment. Mr. Leake had the most active contempt for the talkative patriotism, the rhetorical claptrap, which passed for the real thing among even educated Costaraguans. In his opinion they were not fit to have control of a territory of such magnificent possibilities "if developed by us." He was even more contemptuous of the legal and political men of San Benito who made a living out of the endless litigation arising from the vagueness of the new Constitution's attitude toward the old concessions. There was that platinum claim in Las Esmeraldas, a concession the size of an English county, originally granted to old Don Orlando Perkins, who had financed the survey and employed the prospectors. That was all right because Don Orlando was one of the big men of his day, an enlightened Englishman who had benefited the country enormously. But in Mr. Leake's view such concessions should have been entailed, the state retaining the right to recapture after, say, fifty years. Instead of which, when the old Don died, Las Esmeraldas passed into the hands of a North American company

who merely wished to squeeze all they could out of the country. They had a fellow down here now, nosing round trying to get the concession confirmed under the new Constitution. Mr. Leake did not believe in letting the country's resources get into absentee hands. He had the Englishman's suspicions of American methods. A book he had read called *Frenzied Finance,* by a frenzied financier in the United States, had found its way from a London circulating library to Mr. Leake, and had confirmed those suspicions. He did not understand more than half of the book, but he was convinced that "they didn't want anything like that in Costaragua."

He got up from his chair and swung the telescope round. The *Sirena* had passed into the harbour and out of sight. He walked to and fro, thinking of the *guardacosta* with the surface of his mind. His real attention revolved round the tense situation in San Benito. It was his opinion, never uttered to a soul, that the president was a stick. When Señora Munn had murmured, as she laid down *El Diario,* that Don Hernando never did anything at all, Mr. Leake remained silent. He saw that things might be infinitely worse. He saw that Don Hernando, with his conservative wife and pious predilections, was only held back by his daughter, Señora Striker. He believed that Don Francisco Striker would be able to get the government to sanction the railway as far as the capital if the president were not stampeded by some sudden outbreak. The man had no stamina. An opportunist. He thought states grew by bargaining with bandits, by issuing timid manifestoes full of fine phrases.

The trouble, Mr. Leake believed, was Don Orlando Junior, the adopted son whose real father had been a stormy petrel of the past. He was aggressive, contemptuous of the feelings of the hidalgos of Camagua, the reactionary agriculturists who were, after all, the backbone of the country. They were ignorant, narrow, and wrong; but Mr. Leake knew it was due to the forefathers of those men and women that Costaragua emerged from the murderous rule of the captains general of Spain. Mr. Leake's vision showed him those old families accepting the railway and all that it implied. He knew Don Francisco Striker had the same vision. It was Don Orlando, a cynical man of immense personal force, an uncompromising Modernist who would rather have civil war than wait a few years, who was followed by a crowd of jackals in San Benito, cheap *avocados* and journalists who prided themselves on their atheism, their eman-

cipation from the old morality, their liberal conceptions of republican principles. Some of them openly advocated a rapprochement with the United States, eventuating in annexation. Having nothing to lose themselves, they vigorously proposed the confiscation of the great estancias, the suppression of the church, the secularization of the schools. Don Orlando accepted the vociferous support of this sinister party without identifying himself with it openly. It was Don Venustiano Alvarado whose tertulias were attended by the leaders.

The Conservatives had their mad mullahs as well, though, Mr. Leake reflected. His mind, propelled by one of those elusive associations of ideas which are the result of long preoccupation with a subject, returned to a consideration of Don Carlos Almanzor, that attractive young madman whose father was half French, half German, and his mother a Saracenic Iberian. That was the trouble with Costaragua: the stocks were too recently confused. He returned to Don Carlos, and wondered where he had gone after the trouble which landed him in the dungeons of the Cabildo.

The story had come to Mr. Leake from his agent in San Benito. Mr. Leake's agent was a lively young Jew whose father had been an archeologist for a Bavarian museum until his death, in the bush of Las Esmeraldas. Young Hermán, like many other Costaraguan orphans, was known by his native mother's family name of Carrera. He had no political aspirations, and lived the life of an amused spectator in the capital, preparing, as he sometimes wrote Mr. Leake, to write a novel of national life. He spent long hours in the National Archives extracting passages from the early records for Mr. Leake's own purposes. Young Hermán professed no interest in the past. The Costaragua he loved was the Costaragua of to-day, of the courts, where young *avocados* flung their arms about like windmills, of the sombre arcade in front of the Capitol where the students of the university walked back and forth reading their lessons. When young Don Carlos Almanzor, whom he knew socially, was suddenly arrested after a wretched seller of lottery tickets had reported political meetings in Almanzor's house, the interest of this to Carrera lay in the fact that Almanzor was really rather liberal in his opinions, but was madly in love with Yolanda de Mara, ward of Don Orlando and betrothed to the same caballero. Young Hermán, listening at tertulias and in clubs, was able to expend his cynicism upon the beautiful Yolanda.

Like most intellectual men of his race, Hermán Carrera was not carried away by the common sensuality of the Latin American. He admired Yolanda. He wrote to Mr. Leake:

She is a glorious creature, but her position in San Benito is peculiar. The Obregons and Abrines, of course, will have nothing to do with her. In their opinion the wealth of Don Orlando the elder derives from their mother's family the Alvarados. The present Don Orlando they regard as an adventurer and Señorita Yolanda as an adventuress, conspiring to establish a new family upon stolen loot. Señorita Yolanda, I assure you, is quite innocent of any such conspiracy. She would prefer to live in Europe or North America. I am quite convinced that she is not in love with Don Orlando. He blames her for her failure to be accepted by the principal families. The moment he discovered Don Carlos Almanzor's indiscretion, he acted. And that is why you see them at the Pension Francia.

So young Hermán had written a few months before from San Benito. But Mr. Leake was not convinced that Don Orlando had gone to New Orleans merely to escort that glorious creature to a safe seclusion from her lover. He had seen them at the Pension and on board the *Santa Brigida*. Mr. Leake knew that when the *Candleshoe* arrived with the machinery for Don Venustiano's laundry—any day now—he would have news of Don Orlando.

He walked to and fro in the intense darkness of his veranda beyond the yellow cone of light from the green-shaded lamp. It was, he reflected again, the confusion of the stocks which made Costaragua such a problem for the future. How could one foretell what the next generation would be like? Just think, he said to himself, of this! Look at Don Orlando and Don Carlos and young Hermán himself! They were no more dons than he himself was. They were half-breeds, mongrels. Some of them were bastards into the bargain. Ah! but they were the salvation of the country eventually! They were bringing in new blood, evolving a new vigorous race. It was mediæval Europe over again, without the background of the barbarian invasions. It was a more difficult country for civilization. On the other hand, he added to himself, it was easier for the unprincipled adventurer to seize the power . . .

Mr. Leake raised his head sharply. The sound of a firearm came over the roofs of the town. It was faint because the wind carried it away, but it was beyond doubt. He was suddenly aware that the uneasiness he had experienced throughout the

past few days had culminated in that shot. Ambiguous conjectures dissolved. It was almost as if the appearance of the town changed at the moment of that distant explosion. The significance of the *Sirena* became overwhelming. Mr. Leake, murmuring the word "Bustillo!" went into his bedroom. But he was still incredulous. The days of Urdenate were over, surely. Were they ever over in Latin America? he asked himself. One had only to look at Don Orlando. It was a paradox, of course; but Don Orlando was practically planning a revolution to support the elected government! Mr. Leake suspected at times that Don Orlando was deliberately exasperating the Agrarians for the purpose of forcing them into indiscreet action to justify a short period of martial law.

Hurrying into a suit of white drill, the consular agent took his way downstairs. He lighted a candle or two in a tall brass candelabra. He found his keys and a soft dark hat. His servants were asleep across the yard at the back. He stepped through the screen door quietly and walked away through the grounds. His tennis shoes made no sound. The moon was sinking behind the hill above his house, and he was in deep shadow.

Now what? he asked himself.

CHAPTER VI

IT WAS like a visitation from a heavenly being to Mr. Claxon.

It had occurred to neither Captain Bustillo nor Don Carlos that he might not go at once to the alcalde. He walked up the jetty with a curious movement, slow and then fast, one hand in his trousers pocket, his eyes seeking first one side and then the other. He had had a glimpse of the two men seated on preserved meat cases behind the two machine guns, both of which were exactly behind his back as he went ashore. He remembered the men as sitting with their grass-slippered feet stretched out on either side of the low tripods, one hand grasping the short lever which, when pulled, fired three shots. There were three barrels to each gun, each with its sheet-brass cartridge hopper sticking up a foot or more. They had only to pull and he would feel a hot stinging blow. Or perhaps he would feel nothing at all. Perhaps he would be gone for good. A sudden wave of indignation seized Mr. Claxon. For the first time that evening he realized that he was involved in the animosities of desperate men. He was indignant at the ease with which these fellows from Rio Taga had established themselves to command the port. Not a sentry at his post or awake. He wavered onward. The jetty seemed very long. He discovered that he could hardly hold himself back from a run. He was aware of a flash of intuition. He could see into the minds of those two men behind the Maxim-Nordenfelts as into two pools of dark water. He knew that if he broke into a run they would be suddenly vitalized into pulling the levers. It would be a practically involuntary action. He could feel that.

Only when he reached the barracks opposite the custom house, a shabby, unpainted building whose veranda hid him from the line of fire, did Mr. Claxon recover his normal intelligence. He leaned against the building and wiped his face. He looked up and saw three or four men leaning over the balcony smoking cigarettes. He shook his head slightly and began to move away. They were leaning over him. He could see their pointed straw

hats protruding from the shadows and the fall of bright ash as they hunched on the rail. They were, to his heightened imagination, meditating a villainy up there. He heard a voice, a sibilant whisper, and he halted uneasily.

The ground floor of the barracks was empty, lighted with an oil lamp on the wall at the back. There was a pungent odour of unwashed blankets, onion, and cigarette stubs. At the back, near the lamp, a ladder ascended. The sibilant whispering upstairs had ceased. As Mr. Claxon took a step inside he could hear footsteps. He saw that the trapdoor had been bolted. Captain Bustillo, after disarming the comandante's men, had simply driven them upstairs and locked them in. They could climb down only on one side of the balcony, the side in view of the jetty.

He turned and slipped out. He was not any more of a coward than most men, but he had not been prepared to find that the business of revolution was in actual fact a business, with a technique—almost with touches of inspiration. This Captain Bustillo, while he might be out for revenge and loot, for some vague patriotic notion, had also a professional pride and interest in his job. Mr. Claxon was as ready as the next man to admire Captain Bustillo—now he was out of range of those two things on tripods. He hurried.

He hurried because he wanted to see Gina. Gina would tell him what to do. Gina would have the whole situation clear when she knew that the comandante was locked up in the calabozo.

The empty vista of the Calle del Mar, illuminated by the moon descending behind the mountains, lay beyond the barracks and the Custom House across the street. For a moment it was as though the tower were under some enchantment, as though the efficient Captain Bustillo had by magic arts, or even by that single shot, turned it into a city of the dead. Mr. Claxon was in a condition in which he might have hallucinations. He hurried forward, not quite so sure as at first that Gina would have an immediate solution of the problem confronting him. He did not believe his eyes when he saw a tall high-shouldered man in white clothes and black hat, with a walking stick, cross the Plaza San Martín and come down the street toward him. He thought fretfully, "What'll I do now?" and felt suddenly very tired. He saw the man swinging his stick, the shadow on the ground between them enormously elongated and fantastic. And then,

coming to a row of buildings arcaded over to the street, the man halted in the shadows.

He was putting a key in a padlock as Mr. Claxon came up.

"Yes?" he said, and opened the door with a rattle and creak.

"Mr. Leake!" The exclamation was half a sigh of relief. "You're the one man in this town I'd rather see! You know what's happened?"

Mr. Leake had gone into his own dark showrooms. He could be heard moving about in there. He struck a match and lifted the globe from a lamp.

"Come in," he said quietly. "Thought you weren't just taking the air."

Mr. Claxon, recalling the episode in years to come, would remark:

"And do you think that gol-darned feller would ask me what had happened? Not on your life! He had something in his veins, but it wasn't blood."

This was an exaggeration. Mr. Leake had plenty of blood. Some of it now made a bright spot on each cheek bone. But he lacked the gift of sudden friendliness. Perhaps he lacked any sort of friendliness as Mr. Claxon understood it. He seemed to be in a sort of decorous panic whenever he was with Mr. Claxon lest that man should slap him on the back and wedge a cigar in his face. Mr. Claxon, in need of the cedula of the country, a species of police pass, before going to San Benito, had been conducted to the alcalde by Mr. Leake, who recalled the interminable handshake on parting. He was resolved not to let Mr. Claxon do that again.

He stepped round his visitor carefully and closed the door. Mr. Claxon noticed that he slid a bolt. Then he returned, took the lamp, and walked away down the long chamber, while the shadows of cane mills, vertical steam engines, belt pumps, and circular saws leaped upon the walls and fled over the floor. Mr. Claxon followed, studying the perplexing rigidity of Mr. Leake's back view; the loftiness of the broad shoulders; the way his head ran straight down to meet them; the springiness of the man's walk. Thought he wasn't just taking the air, eh! At three in the morning!

Inside that silent place the events of the evening became distant and doubtful. Everything, in the presence of Mr. Leake, lost its glamour. Mr. Claxon, whose quick, unconventional mind

was already beginning to admire Captain Bustillo, had a guilty feeling as he followed Mr. Leake into the boarded-up part at the back. Why didn't the fellow speak? It was extraordinarily difficult to open a conversation with a man who went steadily on, very much as his ancestors had done, carrying out the routine of entering his office. In reply to Mr. Claxon's tense statement that a ship had come in, Mr. Leake said, "Oh, yes?" in a politely interested tone, put his stick in an upright earthenware drain pipe, and pushed open another door leading to an inner sanctum. The ground glass, yellow with age, bore the word Private. Perhaps it was mere accident, but the door, left to itself as Mr. Leake walked in, swung to with a soft click of the latch. It had an undeniable effect on the man in the outer office. It made him aware of centuries of diverging traditions.

Mr. Leake was behaving, at three in the morning in Puerto Balboa, just as he would have behaved in Queen Victoria Street, in London, at ten in the morning. All the time he was moving quickly, deftly, quietly about his office, he had his back to Mr. Claxon, not intentionally or discourteously, but because he was on the defensive against the latent vitality in the American, who, he could see, had had some sort of experience.

"I said a ship's come in," repeated Mr. Claxon.

"Yes, the *Sirena,*" said the consular agent. He had lighted another lamp, and setting a patent fire brick, for which he was sole agent, against the office door, made a slight gesture inviting his visitor to take a seat. He took his own office chair and, unlocking a desk drawer, took out another bunch of keys.

"Then am I to understand that you are in the confidence of those chaps on the dock?" asked Mr. Claxon. Mr. Leake relocked his drawer and contemplated the two bunches of keys for a moment. Then he rose.

"What chaps are you talking about?" he asked quietly.

Mr. Claxon, taking a deep breath and then suddenly yawning, told the consular agent what chaps he was talking about. He explained how he came to get mixed up in it and what he had been ordered to do.

"Ordered?" repeated Mr. Leake. "I don't know about that. If I were you I'd wait a bit."

He stood by the door, holding the keys as though judging their weight, and was evidently moved. Mr. Claxon watched him in wonder. What made the man so tongue-tied?

The fact was, Mr. Leake was preoccupied with a problem of which Mr. Claxon had no knowledge. It was whether Captain Bustillo, the amateur alligator hunter, would remember Leake & Co.'s supplies of cartridges. This was what had brought him down at once. To save the enormous freight on recurrent small, heavy consignments, Mr. Leake had his ammunition, from Birmingham, in occasional large lots. It was stored in the cellar under his feet, in hermetically sealed containers, along with a quantity of rough stores in sacks and barrels.

"Then you think it's just a bluff?" said Mr. Claxon.

"A bluff? You can never tell. But why don't they come in and occupy the town, if they mean business?"

"It's my belief they are waiting for a ship."

"A ship!" Mr. Leake turned and looked at his visitor without the slightest concealment of his surprise. Mr. Claxon nodded.

"Yes, a ship. The young fellow, Don Carlos they call him, is after a girl on a ship. He talked big about General Gonzales coming down, but it is the ship he thinks about. They didn't put the *Sirena* alongside until they made sure there was no ship coming in."

"An extraordinary thing, that!" said Mr. Leake. "Why didn't you say so before? H-m!" He swung his keys on his finger. Mr. Claxon saw he had made an impression, and he wondered. Mr. Leake made no immediate move to carry out his intentions. He stood as though suddenly overwhelmed by a rush of sinister possibilities. His knowledge of Costaragua enabled him to connect, for example, the new laundry in San Benito with the activities of Captain Bustillo. The girl on a ship was a longer leap. He had a difficulty in believing that mad young man had gone down to Rio Taga. Ah! but—— He turned again to Mr. Claxon as though about to speak and was pulled up again. There was the *maquinista* who had been to the hacienda on Lake Cristobal, the hacienda that was on the Cordoba-Rio Taga trail. He remembered that man's alert air of secret intelligence when he came in, his carpet bag of gear over his shoulder, his revolver in his belt and a roll of blankets under his arm. Secret intelligence. News that might, to his costeno mind, inspire him to treachery, or say, rather, to a simple desertion, as an animal will abandon its human associates without thought or enmity or remorse.

"But it's perfectly plain," he added, half to himself. "But how did they know? Ah!"

Once again he found a clue, obscure and far-fetched unless one knew the country; knew also, through young Hermán's shrewd eyes, the girl in the case. Captain Bustillo, getting his cartridges, had been to the post office for mail. He had letters in his pocket. The *Santa Brigida* had just called. Who wrote to Captain Bustillo from foreign parts?

"It may be to you," remarked Mr. Claxon. "I'd like you to understand, Mr. Leake, that I'm addressing you now as an American citizen. You are the United States consular agent. I represent a company with large interests in this country and I'm entitled to protection . . ."

"Not if you make yourself a messenger of revolutionary pronunciamentos," said Mr. Leake, swinging his keys. He looked steadily at Mr. Claxon. "It makes a difference, you know. That's why I suggested waiting a bit. No good getting in between these people."

"What am I to do with this, then?" Mr. Claxon drew the paper out of his pocket.

The actual sight of that symbol of Costaraguan civilization had its undeniable effect on the tall blond man standing at the door. It was almost as though he had not believed in its existence before. A faint smile appeared around his lips hidden beneath the small curled golden moustache.

"Really? It may explain a little. Have you read it? Allow me."

He took the rough sheet of paper and unfolded it, holding it near the lamp. He looked up.

"Would you care to know what you propose to spread round?" he asked politely.

Mr. Claxon folded his arms. He was thinking, not of Captain Bustillo, but of Gina. A profound weariness of spirit, distinct from fatigue of body, made him long for the support of her voice, for the vitalizing power of her presence. He even closed his eyes for a moment to think of her. She was strong, she was the person to whom, without plan or deliberation, he turned instinctively at this moment, when he found himself entangled in the incomprehensible animosities of native life. He heard Mr. Leake reading, with occasional pauses to reassemble the meaning in English, and he was inspired with a vague fear of

men for whom such words might be the very breath of life. He listened:

CITIZENS OF PUERTO BALBOA:

The Liberating Army, under the orders of the intrepid and skilful General Pablo Gonzales, has occupied San Paulo and is advancing upon Puerto Balboa.

Citizens! It is our duty to inform you that hatred of tyranny has aroused the Spartans of Rio Taga to join the Liberating Army. Victory, marching in front of our banners, will remain faithful to our glorious arms when we engage the mercenary troops of the corrupt oligarchy which, supported by foreign capital, has usurped the power of the people.

Citizens! The time is at hand when Costaragua must be freed from her chains. The dictates of virtue, valour and patriotism demand that you assist the Liberating Army. Our hearts expand with the sweetest hopes for the future. Upon our sacred soil no foreigner shall press a profane foot without permission from the congress of patriots about to be convened in the ancient capital of Costaragua.

Citizens! You are Costaraguans! Now is the time to proclaim to the civilized world your fidelity to the eternal principles of republican government.

CARLOS ALMANZOR.
For the Spartans of Rio Taga.

Mr. Leake laid the paper down on his desk and went out. He could be heard unlocking a door, and then his face was illuminated by another lamp with which he descended into a lower region full of vast shadows that struggled with each other on the ceiling of the warehouse. He could be heard, too, rolling barrels and dragging things across a hard floor.

"Well," he said, when he came back, and as he ascended the stairs his shadow was like some master of genii who fled along the walls before him: "Well, what do you think of your chances with those chaps out there?"

"You believe this about the Liberating Army, then?"

"No. That's bluff. Gonzales hasn't the force to occupy San Paulo, and we'd have had an inspection car down with the news if he'd cut the wires. The wires, however, are open. I looked in as I came down. The operator was relaying a code cable. No, what I worry about is not in that thing," he nodded toward Mr. Claxon to indicate the proclamation. "It is the ship you heard them mention. I think they have had news somehow of the *Candleshoe,* which is due here with cargo. The government have had the proposal before them to purchase her for a trans-

port, but the measure was lost. I have reason to believe, however, that Striker-Perkins have taken her over."

"Why should that——" began Mr. Claxon and fell silent. "Yes," he said, laying his head back against a wall map of Costaragua. "Yes, I guess it's one of these long chances. But let me tell you, Mr. Leake, those birds out there know what they're doing."

"I am aware of that," said Mr. Leake. "If they were as clever in business as they are in this sort of thing, they would be millionaires. What are you going to do? They may occupy the town if the ship doesn't turn up. Or they may if she does turn up; afterward, I mean, if what I suspect is the fact. If I were you I'd stick to the Pension Francia until it's over."

A change passed over Mr. Claxon's face.

"What about the other foreigners in the town?" he asked. Mr. Leake looked round slowly.

"For instance?" he murmured.

"A girl, for instance," said the other man boldly. "One I'm interested in. I've promised to see her safe to New York."

Mr. Leake, who had been putting his warehouse keys away again in the desk, took out his handkerchief and polished his eyeglass. Something in Mr. Claxon's voice warned him that they were now on debatable ground.

"Er—something rather special?" he inquired.

"I'll say so," said Mr. Claxon. He thought of Gina's face, the austere beauty of her lips, the hair drawn away from the smooth white forehead, the indomitable dark eyes. Mr. Leake reflected again. Men did strange things down here. The hot lands bred sudden blazes of passion. He had seen them in the town, waiting for the *Santa Brigida* to take them to the mail boat at Colon, after years up-country, tremulous with alcohol, when they appeared at intervals in his office for visas. Down in the dives behind the church they would remain until the boat arrived, the prey of some fortunate harpy who bled the victim white by sailing day. Well, anyway, those chaps lost their money and their health too, and perhaps their self-respect; but they stepped ashore in England or Holland or North America free men. This was perhaps worse, Mr. Leake suspected. He had had no real experience of women who were not ladies, and was aware of no differences among them. What was the use of splitting hairs over such a matter? "Those creatures," he called them, were out for the boodle every time. He did not deny for

a moment that they could inspire passion, especially in men from colder climates. The passions in question were like the flaring blossoms that bordered the line where it ran through the jungle—they were flowers of evil to men. What could one know of those women, after all, he argued. He looked at Mr. Claxon again. Yes, it was something rather special. Fellow was under a strain.

"I say," he said, "you don't want to fasten a millstone round your neck, you know."

"I'll take care o' that," said Mr. Claxon thickly. "Listen, she's in the Calle Potosí—boards with an *auditore* named Ugarte. Perhaps she's in a little too deep with the comandante—you understand? He's in jail now, and maybe he and the other fellows'll bring her into it, see? That's why I'm worrying. She's through with 'em; only stringin' 'em along, if you know what I mean. She got no use for them dagoes. She isn't a millstone, anyway. Get that straight."

"As a rule these girls can look after themselves, my friend," said Mr. Leake, reaching for the lamp.

"Ah, but this Don Carlos, he said he'd speak to General Gonzales in our favour," said Mr. Claxon. He saw the expression on Mr. Leake's face change as he picked up the lamp.

"You're not banking on that, I suppose."

"I've got to look after her myself, then," he returned, pressing his hands to his eyes.

"You don't seem to see my side of it," said Mr. Leake. "If this girl—don't tell me her name, it doesn't matter in such a case—if this girl is mixed up with those chaps, it's going to make it very unwise for me to barge in as consular agent for you. In either case. I mean, no matter what happens, you'll find a woman is a trouble maker in this country. Or anywhere else."

He turned round as they filed through the office, and faced Mr. Claxon.

"Always!" he said, with a glance at the floor.

Mr. Claxon was surprised. He could never think that way about women at all. He who had roamed about the world, never professing allegiance to a woman beyond the immediate days, who had never, since his wife's early death, felt the trammels of a woman's personality clutching and crippling his own, thought them "a wonderful influence on us men," as he put it. It was the other man, who had devoted, with thick-witted intensity, the whole of his imagination to one woman, who had lived

alone in a sort of bewildered solitude, and who knew nothing about women but only about a woman, who enunciated the doctrine of their universal destructiveness. This difference in outlook arose from their characters rather than experience. Mr. Claxon was one of those men to whom matrimony and romance were equally congenial. He could extract more from a single episode than Mr. Leake would derive from a lifetime in the gardens of Aphrodite.

Standing among the machines in the warehouse Mr. Claxon saw the consular agent turn out the second lamp, and they were in darkness. He heard a light cough as Mr. Leake advanced to the door.

"And what about that girl on the ship?" Mr. Claxon asked. "You mean her too?"

"What about her?" Mr. Leake moved the bolt back and opened the high narrow portal upon the ghostly pallor of the dawn. "What about her? I should say so! She's very likely the cause of the whole damned business."

PART THREE

CHAPTER I

NOTHING had ever happened during Charlie Harris's twenty-three years on this earth to give him a good opinion of himself, and yet he had it. At thirteen, having been expelled from a nice private school in Princes Park, Liverpool, picked out by his mother, he followed his elder brothers down the front steps, into Liverpool, down Water Street, and on board a sailing ship of which his father was what is known as the overlooker. That is to say, to quote Charlie Harris, with his badge cap on one corner of his pale straw-coloured head, "he overlooked nothing." Certainly he never spoiled his sons. A small bag of dunnage and a letter to the master started each of them in life. Captain Harris, who used to walk along the docksides in Liverpool eating an apple, gave them what he had received himself. It worked surprisingly well. He knew a seaman needed no education beyond the three R's, and he was also alive to the fact that these four sons of his would thank him and brag about him in after life. To shipmasters who were spending their hard-earned cash on schools and colleges he turned a grinning face. When he ate an apple he ate skin and core as well. He did it in public, with a view to scandalizing his brother ship masters, who had a passion for gentility. He enjoyed deriding them for their pathetic aspirations.

"My lot are shellbacks," he would say. "Hard cases. I told each one of 'em when he started what he had to do; I told 'em about women and I told 'em about themselves. Perhaps they ain't gentlemen. Who wants a gentleman on the poop of a wind bag or a tramp? Go aboard that ship, I say, and take your place. The mate 'll see you keep it. And I'll bet a ten-pound note my lads 'll turn out as good as yours, with all their college caps and lahdidah education. They'll know a garboard strake from an oxter plate, anyhow."

Charlie Harris, the youngest of this talented family, knew much more than that. To his father's early admonitions he had added the wisdom of the seven seas. He could, he would confide

to trusted acquaintance, look after himself. He had advanced, moreover, to a stage of mental development where he could see the defects of his father's philosophy of life. All very well to bring up a fellow like a shellback, but nowadays a fellow had to keep up an appearance. Charlie Harris went round with a sporting set in Liverpool when he was at home. A fellow's standing in that set was measured largely by his success with girls. There was a code of honour among these bloods to believe one another's stories. Charlie Harris did believe them. He aspired to emulate them. He developed a peculiar form of pride in the apocryphal seductions which were recounted to him by the other young mates and senior apprentices. And gradually there had grown up in his mind an ideal. Out of the tales he had heard he designed a fabulous affair in which he was adored by the beautiful daughter of a rich shipowner who at once put him in command of the finest vessel of his fleet.

That was the ideal. For this or something like it, he kept a good lookout. When he saw, for the first time, Yolanda de Mara standing by the rail of the *Candleshoe's* poop, he drew a long breath. The very perfection of that apparition identified her in his mind with the shadowy creature of his dreams. But Charlie Harris in all his life had never enjoyed the society of the woman who peopled those dreams. He had once been introduced to the wife of a missionary in a China port who had said to him, "I'm sure you'd like to know my little girl," and had brought forward a stunning piece of about seventeen, who had bowed formally and kept him at a distance. He remembered her deliciously piquant features, her silken ankles, and her hair done stylishly, Lily Langtry fashion, on the nape of her neck. She had reigned in that strange imaginary seraglio of his for years. He had her in mind often, when making love to some little draper's assistant out where the tram lines end. Gradually her image had faded. And on the poop of the *Candleshoe* leaving Havana she ceased to exist for him. Behind his common little grin a spiritual transformation took place. Professional moralists would have failed to detect any change for the better in Charlie Harris's new attitude toward life. But it was for the better. The steps which lead a human soul to perfection are innumerable. Mr. Harris had taken one. He had passed into a fresh stage of his development. His soul was an embryonic organism still, but it sought the light.

And the moment he turned from the sleepy Mr. Punshon and

dived along the deck of the *Candleshoe,* the power of the girl returned. It had been all very well for him to act big in front of that damned steward, but the fact was, she was a stunner. The feeling of worship which she evoked in him had its reaction in a desire to be a bully, to grab hold of her by the hair and fling her on the deck, to show her who it was she had to deal with. He was in the mood of the savage who slays and devours what he worships. As he hurried along, his shoulders hunched, his hands in his pockets, his forward-jutting chin visible in the moonlight beyond the shadow of his peaked cap, his callow eroticism was aroused by the sight of the red-curtained window of the girl's cabin. It spoke to him intolerably of voluptuous intimacies he had never experienced, of dimly lighted boudoirs and exquisite confidences. His small eyes dilated in the glow as he remembered that he would be lying only an inch or so from the girl in that room. As he grasped the poop-ladder handrail he stooped swiftly and strove to find a chink between the curtains as the ship swung gently to and fro. Rafael Alvarez had folded them too carefully, and the window, although not entirely closed, was held by the brass clamp. But as Mr. Harris hung there head down he heard voices. She was talking to someone in Spanish.

Mr. Harris, pulling himself silently onto the poop and merging into the darkness under the awning, bared his gums. His tennis shoes made no sound. He leaned over the rail and saw the open port. A girl's hand lay on the brass edge, as though catching at the breeze. The ventilator in the deck had not been cleared of its plug. He laid his hand on the cowl, reflecting upon the chances of going down and offering to open the ventilator. He knew that, like his own just aft of it, it was over the bed-place.

She was in her bunk and yet conversing with someone. Mr. Harris had a sinking feeling in his stomach when he tried to face the fact that he was already too late. But who could it be? The old man spoke Spanish. Was it possible. . . ? Mr. Harris made a face as he stood, his arms still above his head, at the foot of the companion. No, not this old man, he decided. And then, to his stupefaction, the steward emerged sideways, the curtain of the cabin door draping his shoulders as he carefully carried a small plated tray with a napkin.

Charlie Harris was not conscious of his own mental processes. He reacted to a stimulus with the automatic precision of rudi-

mentary marine fauna, some of which expel inky fluid to conceal their terror, while others communicate an electric shock. The sight of Rafael Alvarez, "that dirty dago," was a stimulus to Mr. Harris. He said, in a snarling whisper:

"Hey!"

"Mister!"

The steward, halted at the door of his pantry, turned an agonized face upon the second mate. Mr. Harris, his head lowered, his chin at a truculent angle, with hunched shoulders and a menacing mincing step, advanced upon the man for whom he had a nameless dislike. It was an antipathy rooted so deep in the primitive structure of his being that it could be called an instinct. It was his inalienable right, as a Britisher, to hate, malign, and do bodily harm to any dago, chink, or squarehead who offended him or merely happened to be handy. The steward's long, sallow face, with its sloping brow, remarkable curved nose, and eloquent, spiritually exalted brown eyes, forever on the point of filling with inexplicable tears, made Mr. Harris want to hit it. Here was overwhelming justification. To be caught conversing with that girl in the middle of the night—the tray was only a blind! Mr. Harris cherished an illusion, common among his kind, that foreigners practised unholy arts upon women to subjugate them. Upon no other hypothesis could one account for a woman of any race looking at any man not an Englishman. Mr. Harris did not reason this out. He did not resemble a reasoning human being at all as he advanced upon Rafael Alvarez, who retreated a step and set the tray down silently to raise his hands in a gesture imploring discretion. In his white singlet, which revealed the gleaming brown curves of his arms and shoulders, the feminine delicacy of his waist, he resembled the worshipper of a hideous heathen god. Indeed, white men were just that to Rafael Alvarez, and Mr. Harris was not only hideous, he was malevolent and inexplicable.

"You keep out o' there now," he whispered, thrusting his face close up to the steward's. He tapped himself on the breast and then pointed to the cabin of Yolanda de Mara. *"Sabe?"*

"Mister! I ask you . . . you no understand! You'll be killed, Mister, if you don't keep away. Believe me, Mister. Not for you!"

Mr. Harris drew back his chin and tried to wither Rafael Alvarez with a glance from under his white eyebrows. For a moment he seemed to contemplate the steward in sheer amaze-

ment that such a creature should have the gift of speech. He pushed forward and, without taking his eyes from his victim, drew the pantry door close.

"Listen, you—what do you know about it? Didn't you hear what she says at supper? Going to meet me on the beach?"

Rafael Alvarez, in distress, shook his head.

"Mister—no! She fool you. You no understand."

The extraordinary sincerity of his voice reached the second mate's intelligence. A suspicion that these two were playing some game darted through his mind. The steward nodded.

"Yes, Mister. She got a sweetheart ashore in Puerto Balboa."

"How the hell do you know?"

"Chrise, Mister! She tell me. You keep away! Plenty trouble. Her faller, he's in a revolution."

"Jeez!" Mr. Harris put his elbows on the zinc-covered shelf and bent his head down. "Come on, steward, what's all this about? Spit it out."

In the tiny pantry with their heads, black and blond and close together, they seemed to be examining minutely some microscopic defect in the surface of the zinc. Rafael Alvarez made a swift calculation, beneath his fright of this young man, of what he could impart without danger. The problem before him was his inability to understand the second mate's animosity. With bewildering suddenness Mr. Harris was now inviting confidences.

When Yolanda had called him he had found her in her bunk, sitting up and smoking a cigarette.

"Bring a tray with coffee and bread," she had told him. "I wish to talk a little," and he had hurried to comply. She made him sit down on the settee and take one of her cigarettes.

"No one will enter," she told him. "It is not the custom. Tell me about the people of this boat."

"Señorita," he had said softly, "we must not speak too loud. The captain has been here many times. He served in the navy of Venezuela under the Illustrious Regenerator."

"Ah, yes, Guzman Blanco, the Regenerator. I remember him at school. First the Liberator, then the Regenerator. What a great history we have had in our countries, my friend! Such fine names! Such *constitucións!* Such marvellous great generals! Do you know, when I was at a school in New York—I have been at school in Paris also—when I spoke of the great Bolívar the young North American señoritas giggled. Of the Regenerator they had never heard, I fear. They giggled. Any-

thing about our country makes them laugh, oh, so merrily. I was ready to scratch out their blue eyes. You, I told them, had a revolution, a war of independence. You have a terrible war among your departments, a war of the interior. You think that makes any difference? Not at all! That, you see, was their war! They have hides like bulls, those North Americans. They think we are not worth anything. Well, the capitan, he has known the Regenerator. Perhaps he will discover a Conservator in Costaragua. What of the others? They are extraordinary animals, except the one I saw in the hotel."

"Señorita?"

"The young *maquinista.*"

"They are not *caballeros,* Señorita."

"He is, my friend." She turned her curious eyes full on the man sitting below her on the settee. "He is a *caballero.*"

"*Si.* He is not like the others."

"I should say not! You understand? No? Well, then, I will tell you that the young man—his name is not very easy for a Costaraguan tongue—is in love with me. And for that matter," she said, putting her hands to her face and looking steadfastly at the bulkhead, "for that matter, I think I am in love with him. I wish I knew if he were faithful."

"Señorita, I do not know. It is his first voyage."

"No. How could you? I did not expect it."

"But they say on the ship that he is a friend of the rich owner in Glasgow."

"Ah! Is that true? Now that does not astonish me at all. I thought he had that manner. He is quiet—but perhaps there is a strong man there." She paused in thought and said abruptly, smiling down at Rafael Alvarez: "Tell me about the others."

"The old officer was once a capitan, Señorita. He is poor because he is without influence and he has many daughters who do not marry. They say they are not beautiful."

"If they are like him that is not surprising," said the girl. "He is like a buffalo. He pants while he eats."

"*Si,* and there is the chief *maquinista,* who is the enemy of the capitan. The second *maquinista* is the enemy of all men except his chief. I think he is a little mad."

"All Englishmen seem mad to me, my friend. All except the young *caballero.*" She mused a little and went on: "Then there is the strange creature who thinks I will see him at the Pension Francia—you say he is an officer. He is like nothing I have

ever seen except on the Folies Bergères in Paris, where there was a clown made up in face like him."

"Señorita, he is nothing. It is not two years since he was a common sailor. He thinks he is beloved by the señoritas."

"And these people, they know nothing what happens when we arrive in Puerto Balboa?"

"Señorita?"

"I say they have told you nothing? But the capitan, he must know." She pondered a moment.

"Señorita, what do I know? I am a Costaraguan, but I am only a poor ignorant man of the coast. I am from Rio Taga."

"Yes, but what of that? The new revolution will begin in Rio Taga, they say. Listen well now, my friend. They will tell you that this business is political, that people in Costaragua can no longer endure the oppression. That is for the people like you, my friend. The Liberators and Regenerators have fine words for the people. But I tell you that in this world everything is done for a secret motive. The Modernistas want to make money out of the railway, and the Conservatives want to keep their money and their great haciendas. And there is a young man who is in love with me and who is working for the revolution in order to get rid of Don Orlando."

"Señorita, is he a *caballero?*"

"Oh, *si!* One of that sort," she answered sulkily. "He is a fool. A devil. They say his father, Don Luis, was a devil. He is never out of debt and was not long ago in prison. Don Orlando—I have been a fool also, Rafael."

"Señorita!"

"Yes. A fool. That is why I am so lonely and frightened on this terrible boat. I am afraid of this young man Don Carlos when we reach Puerto Balboa. I sent him a message; and now, when he finds it is not true what I told him . . . I had not seen the young *maquinista* then, Rafael. I only wished to escape. As if it were possible! I turn round and round in a cage. Who would have thought Don Orlando would have refused to come? I think now he suspected."

She looked at the man staring at her, an expression of sharp distress on her face, which had taken the pallor of ivory.

"Yes," she said, as if to herself. "Somehow he must have found out. I am in great trouble."

Her hair, coiled in plaits about her head, seemed to give out a golden radiance of its own. Rafael Alvarez gazed at her with

an air of desperate yet unselfish devotion. To hear this dazzling creature confiding to him, in their native tongue, the secrets of her life, infested him with an ecstasy he could not entirely understand. For him, a poor costeno, the movements of political power in Costaragua were incomprehensible and usually calamitous. The sight of a file of soldiers, led by a ragged "general" on a stolen mule, emerging into the coastal clearings of his native shore, was ever present in his mind. He had stowed away, long ago, on a ship from Puerto Balboa, to escape the peculiar military experiences awaiting him in the bush or on the parade ground of San Paulo. Rafael, indeed, had become a citizen of a neighbouring republic where military service was not compulsory for the naturalized. He was that most unhappy being, a timid illiterate, for he had no elaborate and acquired excuses for his lack of fortitude. He admired the brave and the beautiful creatures of the world and shrank from the inexplicable cruelty of men like the second engineer.

He sat gazing up at Yolanda, as she revealed her fears, with the air of a worshipper, his long yellow hands lightly folded one over the other. She turned her beautiful head and glanced at him.

"You ought to have been a priest," she said in parenthesis, with a flash of intuition. His large eyes burned in his grief-stricken features as he strove to recover articulate speech. He wanted to tell her it was true. She was suddenly aware, as she talked to this man, with the blood of diverse races fighting in his blood, so that he trembled with the shock of the conflict, that he inspired confession and confidence.

"You should have had a wife and many children," she mused, leaning forward and gazing across the brightness of the sea. "Perhaps that is why I tell you these things."

"Señorita, everything is known to you," he whispered.

"I wish it were," she replied with a shrug. "I wish I knew what lies for me beyond that dark coast out there!"

"Señorita, whatever you command, that I will do. I will be your slave."

"I am only a slave myself, Rafael. A woman in our country is under that curse. She is of no value except as a man's property. She has to deceive to live. She can only change from one prison to another. But, my Rafael, what I need is not a slave but a friend, who will aid me when I ask him. A young gringo in New York told me that it was impossible for a man to be the

friend of a woman. He said they could only be in love. He was a young man who knew everything in books and nothing at all in life."

"Tell me what to do, Señorita," said Rafael. "I am only a poor——"

"Do not think about that all the time," she said quickly. "The gringos, they are not like that, my friend. They walk on the earth as if they owned it. Even the vilest of them do that. Listen to me. When this boat comes to the port, I go to the Pension Francia. Perhaps the young man will be there. Then it is as God wills. But if not you must take a message from me."

"To him, Señorita?"

"Oh, no! To the young *maquinista.*"

"Where will you go, Señorita, if there is a revolution in the port? It is safe on the ship."

She gave a slight shrug.

"Yes," she whispered, leaning forward so that her face emerged, like a lovely mask, from the half light of the curtain. "Yes, but I see they have told you nothing, Rafael. This ship belongs to the Company. By and bye, Rafael, there will be no Costaragua. There will be only the Company. There will be many ships, many ports and great towns in the valleys."

"You mean the railway, Señorita?"

"*Si.* The railway is only the beginning. It is a long snake with its jaws fixed in the heart of Costaragua. By and bye it will crawl up to the head in San Benito, and then Costaragua will be finished. The Company will own everything."

"You think that, Señorita?"

"I? No. I hear what people say. I am a true Costaraguan—I believe whatever the last person has told me!"

She smiled down at the man on the settee and drew back slowly into the shadow, muttering to herself.

"I do not understand, Señorita. You say this ship change her owners! Will she change her flag?"

"*Si.* To carry troops to Rio Taga and Corcubion."

"Señorita! What shall I do? They will know I was born here."

"You must get away," she said, looking at him intently. "You are not very brave, Rafael."

"That is true, Señorita. I am afraid of the soldiers. When they came to my village, I ran away. I lay in the forest and heard them coming. I thought of killing myself, but I was

afraid of that too. When I went back, my father and uncles were gone. They returned when the revolution was over. They told me I was a miserable creature and ought to be shot for running away. They were great pulque drinkers, Señorita. I ran away again and got on a ship."

"Why do you tell me this?" she demanded.

"For two reasons, Señorita. First, it is easy to confess to you. You inspire a man with confidence. You understand our people. And second, I lead a very unhappy life. I have no family and no friends. I am ashamed of my fear. When a man has a great fear in his heart and can tell nobody about it, it grows bigger and bigger and takes possession of him. Señorita, I am like that."

The girl raised herself from where she was lying and clasped her knees. She gazed down upon the man who was eating his heart by telling her his secret trouble.

"And I," she said, "have an unhappy life too, my Rafael. You see me here and think I am happy and rich. I have nothing. I am but a possession, an amusement for some idle hour. But that unhappy lot has made my heart so strong I could fight like a leopard for her cubs."

"But, Señorita, you are not despised. That is the most terrible punishment in the world. It makes a man helpless. Men despise me. The capitan, for whom I work, thinks I am no good. I know!" He struck himself lightly on the breast. "I have the keys of the medicine chest, Señorita, and I know all the bottles. I have found out all that they will do. Many times I have wished to take one drug I know. Just a little drink and a little sleep and finish. But I am afraid, and each time I put it back."

He folded his arms and beat his head. She remained upright looking at him for a moment before sinking back against her pillows.

"Then you have neither faith in God nor love for a woman," she said, looking through the porthole at the shore.

"Señorita, I cannot love—you understand—girls of the port. The woman I have in my heart I have never before seen."

"Why, what is this?" she asked, smiling. "What could there be between us, Rafael? I am not the woman you have in your heart."

"*Si*, Señorita. Give permission to adore, to serve!"

Yolanda de Mara, who drew her spiritual sustenance from the imaginary and romantic history she had built up for herself out

of her life, was not offended by his supplication. She was about to answer when she heard overhead the soft, quick footsteps of someone on the poop. Rafael Alvarez set a cup of coffee on the chest of drawers and picked up the tray, whispering.

"The second mate, Señorita. The young man you spoke with at supper. He sleeps in the next room."

He remembered her staring at him as though she had penetrated to his inescapable terror of the gringos on the ship. As he emerged from the curtained doorway he seemed to fall under the thrall of that ignoble emotion once more. Mr. Harris had for Rafael all the mystery of a being from another planet. He seemed animated by sinister and incomprehensible passions. The very hopelessness of ever discovering the causes of his antagonism gave the steward a sort of desperate courage, as though he were dealing with an embodied evil spirit. Indeed, as he saw that unlovely young man descend noiselessly on his rubber soles, coming to rest by grasping the invisible brass rail over the entrance, there was something decidedly supernatural in his sudden appearance there. And this courage of despair prompted him to appeal to the sense of bodily safety, the apprehension he knew all gringos had of personal vengeance, ready to strike.

It seemed to work. As he glanced up at the freckled, sunscorched, reddish face so close to his own, he saw that it seemed to work. He saw the predatory expression fade.

Mr. Harris, confronted with the existence, not only of that toff in Havana, whom he had thought to be the girl's father, but also with another incalculable obstacle awaiting him in Puerto Balboa, gnawed his nails and experienced one of those unpleasant moments when his self-esteem was discovered to be inadequate.

"Is that so?" he quavered. "And why did she say she'd see me at the Pension if she's got a fellow, eh?"

"Mister," the steward said, with a gentle shake of his large melancholy head, "Señorita Yolanda is of first family, *primera nobleza* in Costaragua. She don't . . . You understand?"

Mr. Harris stood up suddenly. In that little chamber, ventilated only by the skylight in the deck above, and full of stale odours, the sweat ran down his face and dripped on the scoured zinc. The whole place was resonant with minute vibrations as the drumming of the propeller jarred the piles of dishes and rows of glasses. A cloth, hung to dry on a piece of string,

quivered. The lamp swung slightly on its gimbals. It was as though the pantry were crowded with plangent thoughts, the half-articulate personality of the *Candleshoe* asserting itself above the clamour of his own vagrant and undisciplined desires. Mr. Harris was the type of young man often described as graceless, but it was scarcely accurate. He had a code. He possessed, somewhere in his system, the rudiments of honour. He rarely spoke of "the cloth," but he knew what it meant; and he had a sudden perception of the ship at this moment, of the obligations laid upon him by his calling. All very well to think of jobs ashore, but he was still under articles. They were all under articles. And the ship, booming through the night, was under articles. The invisible bonds of duty lay upon his mind as he stood up and muttered.

"So she fool me, eh? Sailors are fools, ain't they? And there's a revolution. Gee!" He sank into vacant-eyed thought. They'd never change the ship's flag just for coasting articles. Now, where did this put Charlie Harris? They'd have to write new articles. Oh, God, why didn't somebody who knew say something? That second engineer! Asleep. He, Charlie Harris, ought to get sleep too. It would be time to go on watch, next thing he knew.

Mr. Harris knew nothing of Costaragua save the bar of the Pension Francia, the Cantina Sol on the Plaza San Martín, and the New Bristol House behind the church. He knew Costaragua had revolutions, but he was unable to visualize the actual performance behind the phrase. The atmosphere of Puerto Balboa, outside of the railway shops, was languid. The populace lay about in the shade. Even the soldiers, barefooted and clad in blue denim, with an old rope instead of a leather strap on their worn-out Mauser rifles, were to be seen asleep in the barrack doorway, flies crawling over their cheeks as they snored. It was impossible for Mr. Harris to conceive that picture, ever-present in the steward's mind, of the "general" and his "army" coming out into the clearing, and the desolation of the village when they were gone.

"Mister," whispered the steward. "You needn't be scared. The government is very strong."

"Scared? Me! You think I'm scared of a lot of spiggotties?"

He stood there trying to recover his true professional attitude toward these extraordinary experiences. He heard One Bell go half-past midnight. There was a sort of comfort for him in the

sound. The steward took down a cup and saucer and poured out some coffee. He slid it beneath the young man's gaze.

"Coffee, Mister?" he said gently. "Spiggotties," he repeated, as though to familiarize himself with the sound of that strange word which met him wherever he travelled—spiggotties and dagos. "The señorita just the same, Mister. And the señor we leave in Havana, he's the same too."

Charlie Harris was not listening. He might have told this dago steward with stern emphasis that a lady was a lady and a gentleman was a gentleman all the world over. Thoroughbreds are to be found in all countries. But these pearls of Anglo-Saxon wisdom were lost to Rafael Alvarez. Mr. Harris was thinking. He was remembering, without rancour, his encounter with James Wishart as that young man was going ashore. There was something about James, a sterling quality of character, which negatived antagonism. Mr. Harris, floundering in a confused current of half-understood phrases, hints, and suspicions, had the idea that "that third engineer," when he went calmly over the side the other morning, must have had some notion of what he was about. Larry, the boy, listening for all he was worth in galley and messroom, had heard the chief say something about "the young owner" sending James to the ship. Larry was not the lad to keep knowledge to himself. And now Charlie Harris, who had heard it from the bosun, stood in a trance contemplating a fresh avenue of escape from long years of obscure watch keeping. If that third engineer knew about this —as he surely would if he knew "the young owner"—it would be highly probable that he was the man to keep in with. Mr. Harris had this idea now, and his mind and body reacted to it with the simple directness of a physical movement. He was not aware of it, but the possession of such thoughts marked the fundamental difference between himself and the steward. He stirred, lifted the cup to take a long swill, and favoured Rafael Alvarez with a blank stare as he pulled the door open.

He stepped into the engine room, and the hot upward rush of air made him gasp. The treads of the ladder felt hot through the worn soles of his tennis shoes. The hand rail, oily and polished, startled him with its unfamiliar texture. The great bulge of the cylinders shook beneath him as though in the blast of hot air. Through the skylights he could see the swaying form of the wind sail like a fantastic ghost woman dancing in the moonlight. The high white walls of the engine room rose up

around him reverberating with the clamour of the plunging rods, the choke and clatter of pump valves, the soughing of the exhausts and the sharp collapsing crashes of the auxiliaries.

He crept down the last reach of the ladder to the platform, uncertain of his reception. The three great cranks that seemed to be trampling toward him with inexorable power, daunted him. His ears, attuned to the distant voices of sea and sky, to far shouts and solitary bells, were assailed by a mob of cacophonous and dismaying noises, as though the ship were being thrust through the sea by iron giants, in an enormous treadmill, whose voices were chanting an incomprehensible chorus. The square-domed lamps of shining brass on the bulkheads quivered and sent out slanting plangent rays of light that vibrated among the columns of the engine. A sudden furious rumble and roar sounded from beyond the white walls as a coal passer, in the sweating darkness, shot a barrow of coals into the wing pockets, as though a door had been abruptly opened upon the elemental forces of the world.

He crept over to where a soiled earthenware bottle hung by the neck in the cool downpour of breeze through a ventilator, and he shivered a little. On an iron bench stood a coffee cup nearly full, and a plate on which reposed a sandwich with one bite out of it. Mr. Harris looked up at the telegraph on the bulkhead, at the thermometers trembling on their hooks, at the steady beams of the gauge lamps on the boilers where the water rose and fell rhythmically, in the emerald-green tubes, to the motion of the ship. He recalled his old father's harsh cracked voice saying at home that his sons should go on the bridge. "Steamers are all right, Mother, but the skipper will always be on the bridge." And yet, Mr. Harris thought, glancing at the great crossheads from whose jaws a creamy lather ran down the polished rods as they rose and fell, this was man's work too. And suddenly he was aware of James Wishart, in a sweat-soaked singlet splotched with dark oil, standing close by, wiping his hands on a piece of waste.

James did not speak. It was his habit to wait for a lead. He was breathing quickly now, having been on top of the boilers tightening a roaring gland. Everything up there was roaring. The *Candleshoe*, so far, had borne out Mr. Humphrey's declarations, that she was a wreck. James, however, made no comment after he discovered that the chief was aware of the condi-

tion of things. James knew that a bad state of affairs can go on for a long while without disaster if a man is a good watch keeper. He also knew that making a fuss at sea was perfectly useless.

He was a good watch keeper. That, in fact, expressed his fundamental character, and nothing would ever change him. That his mind was at this moment illuminated and even dazzled by Yolanda de Mara made no difference to James when he was on duty save that he was even more alert than usual. But he was surprised to see the second mate down on the starting platform, and waited to hear what he had to say.

And when he heard it, the hand carrying the coffee cup to his lips remained steady. The voice of the second mate, harsh and strong for all its Liverpool larrikin accent, came to him above the sough of the ventilator and the noise of the engines. He heard what Mr. Harris had discovered when the second engineer, perched on the bridge rail, whispered to him of new articles. He heard what Mr. Harris thought of "that piece in the spare cabin" and the trembling words of the steward. He watched the jaw of the young man working beneath the red freckled skin, the peremptory pursing of the lips as he talked. He seemed to be reciting from memory.

". . . said she was goin' to meet me, see? In the Pension Francia ashore. That's the hotel, see? What do you think of that? Got a fellow ashore all the time, eh? These dagos are all alike, eh? . . . Now, of course, what's the use?" He looked down at his feet.

"It's probably a misunderstanding," said James, setting down the coffee cup.

"More likely a plant to get a fellow ashore. Revolution, he says . . . and the second says we're going under new articles, see? All fits in. Thing is, Mister, are you goin' to sign on again? They tell me you knew all about it in Glasgow."

"What's worrying you, Mister?" asked James, inclining his ear and thrusting out his jaw a little. "You hear a lot of talk on this ship."

"About new articles, yes. Second comes to me on watch. 'We're goin' under new articles,' he says, 'and the question is, do we sign 'em?' he says. That's what I'm askin' you. We got to act together, case like this, Mister."

"No," said James gravely, looking unperturbed at his engines.

He made no further attempt to follow the argument into

details. He had brought Charlie Harris up standing. The possibility of that simple negative had never entered the second mate's mind. It sent all his curiously assorted illusions helter-skelter. It acted like a bracing blast of cold northern air upon his fevered imagination—fevered with thoughts of Yolanda, of easy jobs, of getting away from his ship, of doing something he could tell the fellows in Princes Park when he got home. It made him shiver, not with a physical chill, but with the trepidation the common man feels in the presence of character.

"Well, you might tell a fellow if you know anything," he growled. "What are you going to do, Mister? How can anybody get sense out of them two old geezers up there?"

James stepped forward, tapped a pressure gauge lightly, and came back to Mr. Harris.

"Who said she had a fellow ashore?" he asked suddenly. Mr. Harris looked at him keenly.

"Blimey! It's alive!" he jeered. "Why, that dago steward. Says this fellow of hers is in the revolution. One of the leaders, he says. They've been palavering Español all the first watch. Told me I'd get a bullet in my neck if I tried anything. I bet I would! So you can keep off the grass too, Mister. These flash pieces are always a hell of a lot of trouble, anyway."

James seemed not to hear. He had relapsed into his usual calm demeanour. He smiled.

"Chrise, Mister, what's that got to do with us, anyhow? It's the articles. There's jobs ashore. . . . But you know what the old man is."

"What?" asked James.

"Try to beat us down, he will. That's why I come down to ask you, Mister. Second's asleep. Old man, he'll put it to each one of us separate—say the others have agreed. I know him. I've been in a wind bag with a skipper like him. Now, you—they say you're a friend of the young owner, knew all about it in Glasgow, see? That's why I come down."

"What?" repeated James.

"Why, promotion," said Charlie Harris. "Give a fellow the tip, see? Tell you what, Mister, whatever you do I'm goin' to do, see? Harkelaw, Govanlock sell this ship, they'll buy a new one. Home trade's best if there's promotion, if you ask me."

James took a turn on the plates, casting a glance at his water gauges. Sudden flames illumined the low passage to the fire

room, and the sharp minatory rattle of shovel on bulkheads had a sinister sound in the second mate's ears.

"Is he that sort of old man?" asked James.

"I'm telling you," said Mr. Harris, putting a cigarette in his mouth. "You know what these coasting articles are, Mister. Old man finds the ship, runs her himself for so much a month. What he saves, he makes. This old man's out for blood. Going to make his fortune. There'll be a dago crowd, and if he could dodge the underwriters he'd pay us all off. As it is he'll try to sign us on cheap."

He spat threads of tobacco from his lips, struck a match on his nail, and lighted his cigarette. He was in his own element now, watching the world with a smart, slightly furtive sophistication. He had been at a disadvantage when he crept down that hot, slippery ladder. But the third—just fancy the third biting like that on hearing about the girl's sweetheart ashore! The chap was one of these quiet beggars, but all there when you wanted him. Mr. Harris struck an attitude, one hand on the ladder rail over his head.

"What do you say, Mister?" he shouted above the noise.

James seemed to come out of a profound study.

"Stand by the ship," he said concisely.

Mr. Harris swung round the hand rail as on a fulcrum to face the other man.

"What?" he said incredulously. "Stand by . . . stand by . . . ?"

He was looking over the third engineer's shoulder as he uttered these words, his eyes on the engine-room telegraph. He saw the pointer come to life, stir slightly, and swing downward with harsh grating clangs, as though its brazen vocal cords were stiff and tarnished from lack of use. It swung to and fro for a moment like a pendulum, evoking a tense watchfulness in the minds of the two men, and moved sharply to *Stand By*. They looked at each other.

"Pilot!" ejaculated Mr. Harris.

James, answering the call, chalked up the time. He began to move about quickly. A fireman, bent double, suddenly appeared at the fireroom door, straightened and gazed at the telegraph with one hand shading his eyes. James nodded to him and vanished behind the engines with a wrench.

Mr. Harris climbed up through the hot gratings and came out on deck. The moon had set behind the vast broken masses of

Santa Agata. He looked round quickly. The *Candleshoe* was swinging in a great curve to the eastward. Mr. Harris, leaning far out over the rail, watched the manœuvre with his mouth open. Was the steering gear gone again? His gaze, moving slowly toward the west, was arrested by a sudden complicated spurt of red flame. It came from the distant belt of darkness in which the shore was now ensbrouded. Close upon it came a dry rattle like a postman knocking upon a far-away door. He heard the grind of the steering gear galloping madly, the muffled swish of the engine-room telegraph wires in their housing, the sudden overwhelming roar of the safety valves, and the ominous cessation of the beat of the engines.

The moon, beyond the sierra, gave a pallid diffused light. The water in the escape pipe spattered on the awning above him in the first rush of steam and then stopped. The safety valves, as though ashamed of so much noise, shrank into a bubbling loquacity.

And again, stabbing the vague penumbra of the coast, came that dull red sparkle of flame, followed by the dry rattle of the explosions. Mr. Harris made a dive for the bridge, fell over a ring bolt and a funnel guy in the shadow of the lifeboats, and ran forward. He knew that it was not the pilot. There was, to him a significance in James Wishart's words being echoed by the telegraph gong, as though the *Candleshoe* were aware of his decision. Charlie Harris had an indestructible faith in premonitions. In his tough little mind, which had the texture of a closed cartilaginous receptacle, a number of secular superstitions rattled round like peas. In Havana he had bought lottery tickets on the strength of mystical coincidences. Just before he left he had spent a pound on a number that caught his eye, the registered number of the *Candleshoe*. He would not know about that number until a mail came to Puerto Balboa. And as he ran up on the bridge he remembered the thunderous clang of the telegraph, stirred into life before his eyes, as though confirming James Wishart in his resolve to stand by.

As he came up on the little square space behind the bridge and looked forward beneath the sparred shadows of the awning he saw Captain Millerton and Mr. Punshon silhouetted against the pale efflorescence of the horizon. They stood close together. The mate had his plump hands behind his bulging body. Captain Millerton, who had retained through the years a certain quickness of movement and youthful dash, had his hands in his

jacket pockets, thumbs turned up. The telegraph was at his elbow. Charlie Harris, his own hand thrust into his trousers pockets, stepped discreetly upon the bridge and moved over to the other side. Captain Millerton looked at him for a second.

"Who called you?" he asked.

Mr. Harris said nobody had called him. He heard the engines stop and came up.

"Seen anything?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Harris raised the binoculars from the locker at his hand. As he moved them slowly in a circle toward Puerto Balboa there sprang into the circle of vision a small steamer that seemed to be clambering over the smooth foamless undulations of the sea. It was as though she were in frantic haste to leave behind the sinister shadow of the sierra. She was like a toy indulging in prodigious movements which seemed to make no change in her position. Even as he gazed she became clearer. The eastern sky paled and the pallor touched the ridges of rolling water over which she was advancing. Mr. Harris looked at his commander.

Captain Millerton's evasive and bearded face looked pinched and worried. His small eyes were watching Mr. Punshon bending some flags to the halyards that ran from the bridge to the fore-and-aft stay. It was perfectly plain that Captain Millerton, between his private knowledge and professional duty, was perturbed by a customs boat coming out and firing a machine gun to stop. It was a corroboration of all the gloomy forebodings he had entertained since arriving in Havana. It was even worse than he had anticipated. He had certainly expected to arrive unmolested. His experiences in the Venezuelan navy had prepared him for sudden melodramatic and futile extravagances. He knew that these people were incalculable, and the information that Don Orlando Perkins intended to remain behind and come on by the *Santa Brigida* had intensified his pessimism.

Mr. Punshon, intent on his work, seemed to be engaged in a conjuring trick. He made sudden quick passes with his forearms, and coloured flags flew out of his breast. His enormous round red face, the face of a man incapable of envy or malice, was turned up to follow them, as though they were pure thoughts.

"They ought to see them now," muttered the captain. "Better have the ensign too."

Mr. Harris caught the words and put down the binoculars. He heard the captain tell the mate not to blow his whistle—the

second was going. He pulled the ensign out of its hole in the chart-room locker and ran down on deck with it. The sudden swift dawn of the tropics rushed over the sea as he ran. The east was a dusky mauve with green and orange bands. Long lines of light fled across the Caribbean swell and showed the white bone in the teeth of the *guardacosta*. Beyond that microscopic vessel, beyond the steaming darkness of the forests about the Corcubion River, rose up in serene majesty the rose-tinted summits, the eternal snows of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Agata, enormous yet delicate petals in the amethyst bowl of the sky.

CHAPTER II

FROM the moment he had given the order to put the helm over and had seen the vicious sputter of flame from the *guardacosta,* Captain Millerton had not spoken a dozen words. His faculties had been hampered by a sudden rush of suspicions. He had been under the illusion that he was prepared for anything, but now he was bothered by his lack of adequate information concerning the state of affairs ashore. The best construction he could put upon the sudden and peremptory order to stop was that the government boat, coming out to examine an approaching steamer, had got into a panic when they saw his sudden swerve out to sea. Well, they would be able to do all the examining they wanted, but they would have to board him outside their own waters. He figured he was five or six miles from the nearest land now.

He paced to and fro for a few minutes while the flags went up. He could see the *Sirena* plain enough. He gnawed his moustache, crunching it in thumb and finger between his teeth. He remained motionless for a moment, his back to Mr. Punshon, to the *Candleshoe,* far out on the end of the bridge, alone on the sea, assailed by a sinister thought. It had just occurred to him that if Orlando Perkins, with all his cleverness, had misjudged the political barometer by a week or two, if the *Candleshoe* arrived to find the government overthrown and the Conservatives in power, he himself was in a tight place. The cargo, as he well knew, especially that shipment from the German tramp in Havana, laundry machinery for Leake & Co., would take some explaining. They could confiscate the whole outfit. He whistled softly to himself, recalling his early days in Venezuela—not much help now. Old Guzman Blanco, the great Illustrious American of Venezuela, stood no nonsense from revolutionaries. He kept you waiting for your salary, but insurrectos never got hold of the navy, or the treasury either.

He turned and saw Mr. Punshon, benevolently corpulent, waiting by the telegraph. The sight of that invincibly good-natured officer reminded Captain Millerton that he had another

problem to handle when they docked. It was going to be a pretty prickly problem, too, if the revolution had started. He kept reminding himself, "I'm outside; I'm in neutral waters; there's the Red Ensign." All this was true, but there was a catch in it, as usual. There was the cargo. Fat lot of use the Red Ensign would be if Leake & Co.—Leake was His Britannic Majesty's consular agent and everybody else's consular agent too—were locked up and perhaps shot. With this cargo in their hands the new government, sitting tight and sending out the news of their election by large majorities in every department, would have full justification for arresting everybody.

Large majorities! Captain Millerton could see them. He had knocked about down here a long while, contemptuous of the mentalities which came to the surface, like scum on a cauldron, of Latin-American life. He often thought of the chances he had let go by in the old days, when he was a young man. He hadn't been deliberately careless of them. It had been a sort of embittered ignorance of his own character. He had had the mistaken notion that he was a romantic and convivial sort of fellow, and the fact that such a life of poverty-stricken dissipation produced fits of remorse and disgust had not succeeded in disillusioning him. How often he had gone up on deck on a morning like this and felt the romantic loveliness of the tropics, the marvellous glamour of the distant ranges. Aye, felt that he ought to feel it. Fancy running away from a ship as an adventure! He could not believe he had ever done such an act of supreme folly. And not for any reason at all except that he thought it the thing to do. He and the other wasters who bummed a living on Central American waterfronts had no more notion of what they were up to than the stray dogs who lay about in the streets. He looked back at those early days with contempt.

But he was not sorry. As he watched the *Sirena*, that old second-hand Yankee revenue cutter which constituted the Costaraguan navy, taking the onward-racing rollers as a slow old horse takes a loose wall, he was not sorry that he had some familiarity with the speech and ways of these people. He remembered old Harkelaw seemed to have anticipated something like this. Harkelaw knew about that Venezuelan navy business and the hectic years with the French in Panama. Well, he was not going round like a sentimental fool looking for romantic

adventures now. Business. Which brought him round to the problem he wanted to evade.

There was an atmosphere on board the *Candleshoe* he could not analyze. An air of intelligent and critical expectancy. And the men forward were kicking about the grub. It was not his fault the meat sent aboard in Havana was poor. And the potatoes were too dear altogether. He'd make it up to them in Balboa with sweet potatoes. This was so equivocal he didn't believe his own thoughts. Firemen simply wouldn't accept yamos, yuccas, plaintains, and such trash for potatoes. What was a ship master to do? A man can't grow spuds on board ship. Can't pay four shillings a stone for them, either, he reflected.

There was an atmosphere. Was it that girl? He would be glad when she was off the ship. But it was not the girl. It began with the second engineer, before the girl had been heard of. Tension all over the ship. A sense of men leaning hard against the traces, so that some trivial incident would set them off, heads down, against authority. That fool of a steward, who could make stores go farther than any man he'd ever had, would have to be tipped off. The watch were coming along now. You could see they suspected something. Captain Millerton, glancing out of the corner of his eye, saw the fore deck bulwarks draped with the forms of men in trousers and singlets, their sweat rags slipped through their belts over the hip. Their faces, sketchily washed when they went below, looked like sculptures of dirty alabaster. In the light of the dawn, they resembled corpses who had arrived somewhat early on the day of judgment.

So it might be, thought the captain, giving them another brief glance.

The *Sirena,* labouring as though she were trying to wrench herself free from some force under the sea, was coming up upon the *Candleshoe's* quarter. Captain Millerton could now see that she carried no flags at all. There was the three-pounder gun on her forecastle. The last time he had been in Puerto Balboa he had heard two men from a coasting schooner talking in Gonzalez & Co.'s office. One of them told a story of the comandante at Rio Taga who had gone on an alligator hunt in the bayous at the river mouth and who had used that gun on the cayman at long range, breaking huge eleven-foot monsters in half, like carrots. Fellow named Bustillo. Target practice. The joke seemed to be that he had used all the shell in the ship. And

certainly those shots fired to stop the *Candleshoe* were from a machine gun. Pr-r-r-p! An old Maxim-Nordenfelt with the rifling worn smooth. Captain Millerton had heard those things rattle before. Pr-r-r-p!

He stood nearly amidships and watched Mr. Punshon walk toward him with tremendous deference and attention to duty.

"Lowering a boat?" said Captain Millerton. "You'd better get the accommodation ladder unlashed. But don't lower it. Wait."

He had read an article in the paper once, demanding that an international commission investigate the sale of old artillery to the republics of Central America. One of these humanitarians worrying about "destruction of life and property," "oppression of peaceful inhabitants by irresponsible filibusters and unscrupulous bandits." The man was right in a way, but he overlooked the fact that those old machine guns and rifles were as dangerous to their owners as to the enemy. More, in fact.

Yes, there were the Maxim-Nordenfelts on their tripods. Captain Millerton could see the khaki-coloured hoppers sticking up. A group of men were bent over one of them. The captain screwed his face up to repress a reminiscent snigger. Jammed! That accounted for them not firing five, six, seven, ten more rounds to make him stop after he'd hoisted his flags.

The two ships became extremely visible to each other. Their bows pointed toward the sun, which had suddenly fired a blazing pathway between them. The ruddy gold turned the Sierra Nevada de Santa Agata into rose-tinted alabaster with mauve shadows. Captain Millerton, who had taken up his binoculars, saw the men at the gun leap aside as the *Sirena's* safety valve blew off. He came to the conclusion that those chaps were no good. He couldn't steam away and leave them, because of their other gun, and it was possible the pilot was on board. But they weren't dangerous. They were afraid of their own shadows.

The boat, dropped clumsily first one end and then the other, floated. A young man, active and loquacious, followed two sailors, in flat round caps, down a short ladder. Captain Millerton saw him talking to the officer on the bridge, waving his arms, shrugging his shoulders, waggling his fingers with outstretched hands, bringing one hand with theatrical impacts against the other. All about nothing, the captain surmised. You'd think he was giving the skipper orders. And here they came. Captain Millerton turned to walk across to the port side of the bridge.

The ladder happened to be on that side. The bosun was getting it unlashed. He saw the men looking at each other and smiling at the bosun's remarks. Then they all looked aft. The awnings prevented him from seeing the after deck. The bosun caught sight of the captain looking down at him and bent to his work. Captain Millerton heard a light step, a running stumbling step, under the awning. One of the men turned his head cautiously so that he could glance up. And Yolanda de Mara, in a yellow robe that left her throat and ankles bare, with red-leather fur-topped shoes on her feet and a lace shawl over her head, came into view at the foot of the bridge ladder.

"Come up," he said. "What's the matter?"

She held her yellow robe about her limbs and came up quickly. He opened the chart-room door and followed her in.

"Captain"—she turned to him, her bosom heaving, her eyes luminous with anxiety—"do not let him come here."

"Let who come here?" he asked. He motioned her to sit down. "What are you talking about, Miss?"

"The young señor in the boat."

"You know him?"

"*Si!* Captain, I will tell you." She was breathing quickly. "The steward, Rafael Alvarez you understand, called me. He said, a young señor is coming on board. I came out, and when I saw him I understood what has happened. He is coming for Don Orlando."

She pointed to her own breast and made a quick gesture, rubbing her forefingers together.

"No," said Captain Millerton. "I don't understand."

"He will seize this boat."

"Will he? Not if I know it," he told her. "Nobody comes on board here, Miss."

Captain Millerton shook his finger in front of his face and turned to go out. As he closed the door he gnawed his moustache and beard. He wished he had not regarded that girl as a mere encumbrance. He saw now that he had been mistaken in thinking she was just a rich man's amusement. He wanted to talk to her, but the boat was alongside. He heard shouts and Mr. Punshon's deep rumble.

The sea, but for the vast slow swell, like the breathing of an immense bosom, was calm. The boat that lay a few fathoms from the *Candleshoe* contained four men. Captain Millerton perceived that they were all armed with heavy Mauser pistols

and belts of cartridges. The young man was standing up on the thwart, balancing himself with the poise and skill of an athlete. The captain studied him narrowly and failed to come to any conclusion about him. He looked like a caballero, and that was all. He was talking to Mr. Punshon, commanding him to lower the ladder. The mate, leaning on the rail, was at his ease. He looked off with tolerant criticism at the *Sirena*. At the sight of Captain Millerton, the young man turned to him.

"Capitan, you have passengers on your ship?"

"Have I?" said the captain, standing with his head just showing. The young man stamped his foot.

"Ha! You are funny, Capitan! Yes, you have passengers, citizens of Costaragua, who are under arrest. I come to receive them."

"Who may you be?"

"Lieutenant Carlos Almanzor, adjutant of Rio Taga Comandancia. I demand the prisoners at once."

"Got any papers?"

Captain Millerton saw Don Carlos Almanzor look down at his men and give an order. He saw them glance along the *Candleshoe's* side to the after well deck.

"Mr. Punshon," he said. "Send your men aft and stand by the telegraph. Where's the second mate? Mr. Harris, stand by, please."

He stood watching the boat moving slowly aft. The *Candleshoe* concealed it from the *guardacosta*. He turned and said swiftly in a low tone:

"Full astern! And then full ahead!"

The telegraph wires whined in the housings and the bell clanged shrilly in reply. Leaning over the end of the bridge Captain Millerton saw the boat, which had drifted close in, suddenly inundated by a cataract of yellow water pouring from the ship's side. It beat the men down and flung them upon each other. As they tried to fend the boat off the swirl from the propeller forced them back and spun the boat round, bumping against the *Candleshoe's* side.

"Keep her going now," he said quietly. "I'll chance it. Keep her going, Mr. Punshon. Mr. Harris, stand by aft with a rope."

The *Candleshoe* was slowly veering and moving ahead. The immense commotion of the wake caused by the sudden reversal at full speed had caught the boat where four men were desperately struggling in water above the thwarts. The next moment

they had gone over the side and were holding themselves up with one hand while with the other they tore off the ammunition belts.

"Murderers!" screamed the voice of the young man. He had shed his coat and shoes and was treading water. He flung up an arm as a lifebuoy flew out from the poop and dropped with a splash near him. He swam to it.

Captain Millerton walked to the other end of the bridge and contemplated the *Sirena*. He noted that she had no more boats. Lost them alligator hunting, he reflected. He turned to Mr. Punshon.

"We're not murderers," he began.

"Sharks," said Mr. Punshon looking nowhere in particular.

"All right," he said. "Stop her. We will pick them up, Mr. Punshon. Slow astern."

The boat, its gunwales awash, rose and fell on the sea astern of the *Candleshoe*, with the heads of the four men ranged around it. The ship, moving slowly toward them, caused them to subside into comparative calm. Mr. Harris was making fast a rope ladder over the stern.

Captain Millerton took a turn to and fro on the bridge. He was no longer worrying about the *Sirena*. The question was, What about Puerto Balboa? If he went in now, with these four members of the *Sirena's* crew, the town might have been suddenly occupied by insurrectos and he himself would be putting his head into the hornet's nest. Ah! but . . . he thought, so long as the transfer hadn't been completed, they couldn't touch him except they got at the cargo. He knew well enough that a smart *avocado* in San Benito—the sort that came in with a revolution—would find a law nobody had ever heard of before which gave the new government power of sequestration over all property consigned to the adherents of the defeated party. That had happened when old Guzman Blanco went under in '89 and Robles, "the autocrat of the seven days," seized a cargo at La Guaira and sold it at once to the highest bidder. It was condemned by the military junta out of hand.

All this passed through Captain Millerton's mind as he walked to the end of the bridge and back. He saw Mr. Punshon, with a grave face, push the telegraph handle to stop in answer to a whistle—one long blast—from Mr. Harris on the poop. He saw Yolanda de Mara open the door of the chart room and look out at him.

He thought, "She will know something." He looked across at the *Sirena* for a moment. That vessel was beginning to move. He turned to the mate, who was still contemplating the telegraph, as though the thing remained for him an insoluble enigma after his life in sail.

"Mr. Punshon."

"Sir to you."

"See if Mr. Harris has got those men out of the water. Blow twice when you are ready."

As Mr. Punshon descended the ladder backward Captain Millerton heard a familiar voice below. The chief engineer was asking the mate if the old man was on the bridge. And Mr. Barker, in his pajamas, immediately appeared, pulling himself up by his powerful hairy arms. He reached the bridge, stood for a moment tightening the string of the pajamas and observing the *Sirena* steaming across the *Candleshoe's* bows.

"What's up, Captain?" he asked.

The captain said there was some sort of trouble on shore. The *guardacosta* was trying to intercept him for the revolutionaries.

"Intercept, intercept. You're burning coal, I may mention, and the second's having his arms pulled out putting her ahead and astern."

"We're picking up a boat's crew that tried to board us," said the captain.

"You're all cracked, it's my opinion," returned Mr. Barker, "if half what I hear is true. You ought to have gone to Colon for bunkers if you're going to cruise outside. Is he going to board us too?"

Captain Millerton did not reply. He had always had this sort of thing to endure from Mr. Barker. He watched the *Sirena* coming in upon them. An officer in khaki tunic and civilian trousers was waving his arms at the captain of the *Sirena*. Captain Millerton had seen the latter in Gonzales & Co.'s office. There was only one uniform cap like that on the Costaraguan coast. It had a wide band of gold around the crown, and the peak was embossed heavily with golden whorls to represent the plumes of the ancient serpents of Costaragua. It went well with the giant moustaches of the only naval officer in the country. Captain Vasquez had been a sailor on English ships, rising to be third mate. Across the intervening stretch of water Captain Millerton could see Captain Vasquez remain-

ing unmoved while the person in the khaki tunic, with an extremely black moustache, like a charcoal smear on his face, endeavoured to scream orders to the man at the wheel to steer close in. A double whistle sounded from the *Candleshoe's* poop, and Captain Millerton shoved the telegraph over to full ahead. Mr. Barker glanced down at it as though surprised at the ease with which it was manipulated. "Just like that!" he seemed to be thinking. His heavy bull neck rose nakedly out of the soiled pajama suit. His black hair, like his brown moustache, curled tightly. So did the black mat of hair on his chest.

"They try to board you and you try to sink them. I saw that," he said heavily. "I was looking over the rail. I was going to drop an ash bucket on them. What do you want to rescue them for?"

"Well, there's sharks there, and I decided to pick them up," said the captain. He paused a moment and said in a low tone. "As a matter of fact, Chief, I don't know any more about what's going on ashore than you do."

"It's nothing to do with me what's going on ashore," replied Mr. Barker, folding his arms. "It's what's going on on board here." He was looking past the captain's shoulder at the chart room. "There's that skirt in the chart room," he added. "But of course you know that. What you don't seem to be aware of is that you can't carry this thing through alone, Captain."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about this Costaragua charter, that's what I'm talking about. You're dreaming of days gone by, Captain. You've got us on six months articles, and the shipping clerk read them out so fast I don't suppose anybody noticed what he said except me. But you can't keep us on this coast on those articles. You can't change her flag without cancelling them."

"I was going to talk to you about that, Chief," said Captain Millerton. Hurriedly he went to the wheel house and set the course for Puerto Balboa.

"Oh, you were! Well, all I can say is, you've kept your intentions to yourself. And all you can say won't make so very much difference."

"You mean you're going against the Company's interests?"

"What company? You've got to get it out of your head we're going to put our heads in a bag so you can make a lot of money for yourself."

"I may lose on it, come to that."

Mr. Barker threw back his head and looked at his commander. He took a step away from him and seemed to be admiring what he saw. It was evidently very amusing. He laughed, a short hard bark.

"Yes, you will!" he said with immense emphasis. "I can see you doing it."

"The new owners can find me a crew," said Captain Millerton very quickly. He was looking at the *Sirena,* which was passing him close on the quarter.

Mr. Barker had his mouth open to make a reply when he was interrupted by Mr. Punshon coming on the bridge. The chief mate came up slowly. He was very much out of breath. His face was a dark red. He looked as though he had been washing himself and had turned out without waiting to use a towel. He pulled out a blue handkerchief and dabbed at himself. Captain Millerton gave him a look and turned to the end of the bridge, where Mr. Barker saw him throw up his hands.

"They aren't as scared of sharks as you are," he called over his shoulder.

"No!" agreed Mr. Punshon in a ringing tone, which made the chief look at him with interest. "They were no sooner on deck than the leader pointed to their ship coming back for them and they went over the rail like dolphins. I had hold of the young spark, but he was dripping with water and slipped away from me. Good riddance."

"Not so good," snapped the captain. "I wanted to hold them. They'll make it," he said, looking astern.

"Perhaps they were the new crew you were talking about," said Mr. Barker in the tone Captain Millerton disliked so much. The antagonism of the chief had loomed from the first as the major obstacle to success in this enterprise.

"Perhaps," went on Mr. Barker, winking at the mate, "they preferred the sharks to starvation." He shook with an assumption of uncontrollable laughter. "They tell me even your lady friend"—he jerked his thumb at the chart room—"made a holler about the grub. And we nearly had a mutiny last night, Captain."

"Why do you come up here with all that stuff now?" flared the captain suddenly. "You get the grub the regulations allow, and if you aren't satisfied why don't you complain to the office?"

"You always were clever in your dirt, Captain. Lot of use talking about the office when we're going into Puerto Balboa."

"Lot of use trying to talk to you about anything," mumbled the captain. He walked to the chart room door and pulled it open.

Mr. Barker remained gazing at the door after it had closed with a slam, and then turned to the mate. Mr. Punshon carried on as if Mr. Barker had no existence whatever. He called orders to the bosun down on the fore deck. He hummed a tune and walked to and fro, ignoring the sarcastic expression on the chief's face. Mr. Barker turned away and, after a moment's amused reflection, went down the ladder.

He walked along the bridge deck and turned into the engine room. With the skill of lifelong practice he dropped down the ladder to find Mr. Humphries. He would never have admitted it, but he had felt mean just now in the presence of the mate. He was not really mean. The trouble with Mr. Barker lay in his sharp perception of Captain Millerton's character. He was unable to feel any confidence in the captain's fidelity. And this was all the more confusing because he had no doubt at all about him professionally. While he stood on the bridge, aware of all that was going on, even conscious of admiration for the way the skipper had swamped that boat as though by an accident. Mr. Barker knew the *Candleshoe* had a good skipper. But it was another thing to think of him as a man.

Just to be down below was a comfort after the thin, bloodless atmosphere of the bridge. It was not merely that Humphries was his own trade and his own man. Jack was his own kind. Jack, for all his dissipated habits, was a man you could bank on. He would go with you. Even since Magersfontein, Jack had been a fellow pilgrim through the years. They shared a certain anarchy of sentiment. They were tolerant of each other's passions and fanaticisms. They had no language for this peculiar affection beyond a sort of infatuated animosity that gave a bite and savour to their intimate conversation. Indeed, they rarely revealed their feelings save by an apparently meaningless profanity.

Mr. Humphries came round to the front of the engines and hung up a copper vessel with a long wooden handle. He was streaming with perspiration, and his singlet was, as usual, open at the bosom through lack of buttons.

"Well?" said Mr. Barker.

"Well!" mimicked his assistant. "It's anything but well, my bonny wee laddie. The condenser's leakin' like hell, Chief.

That's the news. Like hell. I've been scummin' the boilers since four o'clock, and they are still filling. There's a busted tube. All our work to do again. You'll have to tell your friend up on the bridge."

"Aye, he's a great friend of mine, the lousy skinflint. Jack, do you know he's got the idea he can scare us into signing on at the old money while he makes a fortune out of our bellies and brains? Tell him? I'll tell him he can get the new crowd to fix her, eh, Jack?"

"Where would he get a new crowd, Chief?"

"Oh, he picks 'em up all along this coast. You know he was down in these parts when he was in sail. Venezuelan navy. Remember that sergeant in the Lincolnshires whose grandfather was at Waterloo and afterward enlisted in a South American army? What was his name? Watkins, that's it. Came from Kingston, Jamaica. This old man tried the same game."

"This isn't Venezuela," barked Mr. Humphries. He watched his engines vengefully.

"I know it isn't. I'd rather be in Caracas than Puerto Balboa, any day. I was only explaining how this old man is at home among these dagos. And he may pay us off yet, Jack."

"Nice of him. How far will he get with his new crowd, Chief, while you and me are joining the army."

"Why, is that your lay? Are you on, Jack?"

"Yes, I'm going to try the beach. They say you sleep under blankets in the hills."

"Do they? There's some as sleep under little piles of rock to keep the leopards from digging them up, Jack."

"Well, you said it, not me," said Mr. Humphries. "He hasn't paid us off yet," he added.

"And what wages do you want, Jack, to go on the coast, under the Costaraguan flag?"

"Fifty pound a month, Chief."

"That means you won't sign again at all. Do you see this old man paying you fifty pound a month when he has you here for twelve? Don't you understand, Jack, that the skipper is finding crew and stores on his own? Aye! I taxed him with it. He showed plain enough he knew I knew."

"Did you tell him you knew about the six months articles he got us to sign?"

"Of course I did. But they finish as soon as she's taken over,

Jack. There's only one thing. If she goes on the coast, a man with a second's ticket can take her."

"He won't have her long if we don't tell him what's the matter with her tubes," said Mr. Humphries, moving about at various tasks.

"This third's got a second's ticket, Jack. And you know as well as I do he's a good man; a damn sight better than plenty we know with full papers. Now, then."

"Well, let him do as he likes," muttered the second. "Perhaps he likes being starved. It's me for the beach."

"Jack, I believe you mean to miss your passage, anyhow. I believe you've got that girl in your head."

"Me!" shouted Mr. Humphries. He stood for a moment balancing to and fro on the heels of his shoes and gave a short, bitter laugh. "No, it's just that my clothes don't fit, and God hates me," he said.

"I'd lay you where you stand if I thought you'd clear out and leave me here," said Mr. Barker steadily.

"You say that? You know damn well I never fell down on the job yet. I'm a better man drunk than some of 'em sober. And well you know it. You're tryin' to make me take the blame of what you're doing!" He began to shout again, so that a fireman, coming in to look at the clock, went back with a tale that the second and chief were fighting.

"Now, now!" said Mr. Barker.

"Yes, yes!" retorted the second. "You try to drive the old man into a rage over the grub, so he'll sack us, and then you come down here and say I'm going to miss my passage."

"I don't know what's come over you since we left Havana," complained Mr. Barker. "You haven't gone nutty over that piece in the cabin, have you?"

Mr. Humphries gave his chief a dark look.

"She's up in the chart room now with the old man. You keep away from her, Jack. I shouldn't be surprised if she's at the bottom of a lot of this trouble out here. That chap she was travelling with is one of the big railway men, and she don't see the likes of us."

"She sees the third all right," said Mr. Humphries.

"Perhaps she does. He's a bit of a toff in his way. And he knows the young owner. You're looking for trouble, Jack, if you shove your nose in there. And there's another thing. If we go ashore, we leave the señoritas alone until we know where

we are. I'll punch your face in all over if you don't listen to what I say," he shouted.

The telegraph gave a harsh clang, and the finger moved round to Stand By.

"You make noise enough," said the second, wrenching at the handle. "We're going in now. We'll see who'll stand up to the old man now. You know what the mates'll do. They'll say, 'Oh, certainly, Captain. Very good, Captain,' and swallow whatever he tells 'em. The third will stick to the ship. You heard him say so, didn't you? You needn't expect any backing from any of 'em. Jack's the only man to follow you ashore, Chief. He's the only man to take your lip and carry you indoors when you go to sleep in the gutter. He's the only man you can depend on. Jack Humphries, the good-for-nothing, poverty-stricken don't-give-a-damn Jack Humphries. He hasn't any money, but he does see life."

"I'd say you were drunk if I didn't know you," said Mr. Barker.

"You wait," retorted the second, selecting a heavy wheel spanner from a rack. "Take the levers a minute, Chief. You wait! You've never seen me started yet."

* * *

As she sat on the canvas-covered cushion of Captain Millerton's chart-room settee, feeling the rough texture of the fabric through her yellow silk robe, Yolanda de Mara was possessed by an inarticulate fear, by a desperate conviction that she was now lost. What the captain's slower intelligence was gradually grasping as the *Sirena's* boat came alongside, Yolanda had seen in a flash when the faint crackle of the machine gun roused her from an uneasy drowse in the early dawn. She had seen the well-known old *guardacosta* from her porthole as the *Candleshoe* swung round, and she had slipped to the floor. And when the light grew so that she recognized the figure of Don Carlos Almanzor, she knew that this was a desperate, futile, lone-hand enterprise of those two. She knew that if the Liberals had fallen and the railway been seized, the *Candleshoe* would have been permitted to arrive. It was because something had happened to the main plan in the Camagua Valley that Bustillo had decided on piracy. And Don Carlos Almanzor, dropping into the boat, had been coming himself to the ship. He did not know that Don Orlando, the clever, powerful personality who dominated everything and everybody in Costaragua, was not on

board. And when he found that out he would take her away. He would want her to make good her silly veiled promises to share his fortunes, which were the fortunes of a reckless *politico,* a romantic *criollo.* She shuddered at the thought of going off to the *Sirena,* to Rio Taga, to a lonely hacienda in the hot forest lands of the frontier; without the comforts of civilization to which she had become accustomed; without even the conviction that she was following her real destiny. For an instant she stood furiously upbraiding herself for sending that message to Don Carlos on her way to New Orleans. She had been carried away by the romantic aspect of his behaviour—his sudden imprisonment after visiting her late at night in the Casa Mirador in the Calle Sucre. She remembered now the scene in the archway when Don Orlando, suddenly returning, had found him in the act of mounting his horse. The laundry woman had brought her a brief note in a basket of linen, a pathetic plea to send him a pledge of her fidelity. He was going to Rio Taga when they released him.

For an instant, with the memory of that sentiment and that folly before her, she gave way to a gust of self-denunciation. It was the curse of their race, this febrile subjection to romance. It was the secret of their domination by the nations of the north, that they vibrated like harp strings to eloquence of word and gesture. A sonorous phrase, a superb attitude, captured their imaginations. While the cold northerner moved steadily forward, the Costaraguans gyrated. The very word *revolución* expressed in its resonance and deep-booming cadence, in its literal significance, the fundamental character of those people who dwelt in the folds of the Andes and built their cities on the lofty plateaux between the sierras. It made her mad to feel this quality in her own heart, this instant reaction to spurious emotions when expressed in the manner of the caballeros. As she started to go forward to find the captain, she remembered all those gringos who had come to Costaragua. Even the father of Don Carlos had been a Frenchman. Even Don Orlando's father, that legendary English noble, who had damned his own race for a lot of hypocritical shopkeepers, was a man of driving will, building bridges and irrigation works. They were in every walk of the national life, in banks and business and agriculture. Only the little dark-coated lawyers and intellectuals of San Benito were all of authentic native stock. Only the gabbling *politicos* and the innumerable *secretarios* of departments and

ministries had the true Costaraguan full dark eyes and olive skin.

The impulse to go to the captain had come to her as she recognized that figure in the boat, that lithe, eager, athletic figure of youth—all compact of furious enthusiasm and a strange fever of the soul that could be transmuted, with terrifying suddenness, into homicide. It had been easy, though she knew nothing of a ship, and blundered once on her way. What she could not compass was the captain's attitude toward herself. He had let her into the chart room, a hot cabin with a mahogany table of long blue-backed charts and a seat like a bed, and she sat there listening to the voices outside. She had put her hand to her throat when the voice of Don Carlos Almanzor ordered Captain Millerton to give up his two passengers. Prisoners! She detected in that high-pitched demand the desperate plunge of a frustrated filibuster. The sun had come up on them in the bay and there had been no army rumbling in on the railway. She remembered him standing before her in the high salon of the Casa Mirador, the salon with the enormous candelabra old Don Orlando had ordered from Paris. He had posed before her. He had begun to cut his hair and model his dress to resemble the young Simón Bolívar. In the Casa Bustillo he had listened to the tales of Uncle Umberto, who had a snuffbox and a sword the Liberator had presented to him after the campaigns. Highly scandalous tales they were, because Uncle Umberto had been a crony of Ducondray-Holstein in Paris. Don Carlos was modelling himself on the young man who had taken an oath in Rome, to free his native land. He had stood before her, his elbow on the pedestal of a bust of Shakespeare, and with his finger on his temple had frowned as he murmured the "aspirations" of the nationalists. He said that in the old days the patriots had an open enemy: but now they had gringo half-breeds to contend with. "Better the open tyranny of Spain than the economic slavery of concessionaires. Better the Camino Real than the *ferrocarril*. Our national life is strangled by foreign influences as a tree is killed by the vines it supports."

And he had called her *"delicia del Mundo":* delight of the world. Sentiment! Romance!

She remembered this as she sat listening to the confusion of voices on the bridge and in the water, to the shrill whistles and clangs of the bells. She could see, through the window in front, the back of the man at the wheel, standing as though posing for a statue of gentle melancholy. The strangeness of her situation

made her feel as though she were imprisoned under a hot metal bell. She heard, as from under that bell, the shout from Don Carlos, "Murderers!" and grasped the yellow robe at her throat. The ship shook violently beneath her as the earth trembles in an earthquake on the flanks of Cornaru. She heard the whistle and the mysterious cessation of the trembling. And then . . .

If he was dead, she thought, the whole Calle Sucre and the Avenida Marino would go into mourning because he was an Almanzor. It was part of his affectation of the patriot rôle that he never used the name of his father, Don Luis Chaillu.

She saw that a man had come up on the bridge and was standing near the captain. He was wearing a soiled sleeping-suit whose sleeves were worked back in concertina folds from his hairy forearms. She saw him grasp his own breast and slowly scratch while he kept up a conversation with the capitan. And the capitan looked at this man not at all, walking away from him and speaking as though he were angry. They seemed to her to be under a spell, as though they were uttering words in a hypnotic trance which kept their faces averted, their eyes hard and their lips convulsed in a leer of contempt. They spoke, yet neither their hands nor their faces expressed anything beyond the fixed posture and grimace of an Indian idol. At first, when she looked out, and seeing that man with the lowered head and big moustache gazing at her, she withdrew, she imagined they had quarrelled about her. And presently, as the steamer moved steadily in toward the land and she could see, far away, the snow-capped Sierra gleaming in the morning sun, that sinister being went away and the captain came suddenly into the chart room and closed the door and began to speak to her in a harsh yet fluent Spanish, the mestizo patois of the Isthmus.

At first the unexpected sounds dismayed her. What to the captain, in his relations with her, had been merely absent-minded civility, had struck her as sullen antagonism. The capitan, she thought, does not like women. In New York, in the establishment for young ladies, the daughters of wealthy Latin Americans and of wealthy North Americans, she had been surrounded by considerate deference, soft-footed domestics, and austerely genteel preceptresses. In the Park, in the stores, and in the hotels Yolanda had always been protected from the harsh truculence of the everyday world. It was the source of that unconscious haughtiness with which she confronted everybody

beyond her circle of intimacy. Now she was in the grip of a fear of the unknown. In place of the romantic sorrows of the protected ward of Don Orlando Perkins, she had suddenly perceived, like an abyss opening at her feet, what might happen if that protection should vanish. She was no longer afraid of the lonely hacienda behind Rio Taga, but of an unknown future. She became aware, as she heard those unexpected phrases issuing from Captain Millerton's lips, of the full significance of Don Orlando's decision to remain a week longer in Havana and come on by the mail boat to Colon and the *Santa Brigida*. Somehow, she thought, he had suspected and discovered what she had written. And it was like him to give no sign, to let the blow fall as it had fallen on Don Carlos Almanzor when the secret police suddenly entered his house.

The swift current of her frightened thoughts made the capitan's voice seem distant. She heard him telling her that when he anchored the *Candleshoe* in the harbour he would not go alongside until he received word from the head office. "From the Admor," he phrased it. And he advised her to tell him who and what those people were who had got hold of the *guardacosta* and who came out yelling to him to give up his passengers as prisoners. They must have got wind of the new ownership of the *Candleshoe*. But Striker-Perkins were clever, keeping her under British registry until she arrived at Puerto Balboa. Don Orlando had told him that the señorita would be going home . . . He, the capitan, had no reason to suppose she knew anything about the business on which he had come to Costaragua. For that matter, he understood from Don Orlando that the chances of any organized revolution on the coast were very small. Up in the mountains perhaps. But not down on the railway.

"That was what he did not know—that they were coming down to the port," she said.

"He didn't know the *guardacosta* was coming out." She looked up at him and shrugged. "I think that was why he did not come on this ship!" she said.

"Hey!" exclaimed Captain Millerton, and he stared down at her for a moment. Then he relapsed into English. "This beats cockfighting," he said. "I'm all in the dark after all. Then who is the young grifo who came out in the boat, the one you are afraid of?" he asked her in Spanish.

"I am not afraid of him now," she said in a low tone.

"No? Who knows? You kept out of sight, Señorita? Of

course you know what I know—they are filibusteros and thought to rush the ship, and had no stomach for the job. I was outside Costaraguan waters, you see. Where will they go now, those bandits?"

"To Rio Taga," she said. "The other one is the comandante of that port and the cousin of President Silva's wife. She is a Conservative, and so is Esteban Bustillo. He made use of the grifo, as you call him, to come on this boat. Now he is dead Esteban will run back to Rio Taga."

"He is not dead as far as I know, Señorita. He and his men were rescued from the sea, but they leaped in again and swam to the *guardacosta*. We have their boat astern now."

"Not dead? I heard him cry 'Murderers!' But of course . . ." She paused, chin in her hand, while Captain Millerton, looking down at her, decided in his own mind that this piece knew all the ins and outs of the business.

"What has he against Striker-Perkins?" he asked.

"Don Orlando had him imprisoned in San Benito," she said. "He is one of the young politicos who support General Gonzales. He came to the Casa Mirador, Don Orlando's house, to visit me."

Captain Millerton pushed the charts out of the way and sat on the flat polished table. Touching his beard with one hand he gazed out upon the approaching coast. He could feel the slow lift of the ship in the swell, and he could see the smash of that swell upon the glittering outer beach of Strikers' Cay, that gleamed white in the morning sun between the blue of the sea and the green of the vegetation crowning its ridge. He could see behind the Cay the curve of the shore and the reddish bluff of La Silla which hid Puerto Balboa and made the place look so deserted and forlorn. Only the gray front of the Pension Francia above the trees and a house, halfway up the bluff, perched on struts, were visible as yet. Beyond La Silla there rose slowly against the background of forest a white cumulus of vapour. It floated clear and hung in the still air of that sheltered gully where the railway started to cut through to the river. Captain Millerton was obscurely aware of a feeling of relief at the sight. A switching engine was making up the train for San Paulo. He said nothing, but turned his eyes along the green shores where the mists were being withdrawn like muslin covers from the treetops and the outlaying ranges of the Sierra lay in a dazzling and impenetrable silence. He hardly knew what to say to this girl. He had imagined her to be, as he

phrased it to himself, "one of the family." He knew that the ramifications of a Latin-American family were practically illimitable, that a man like Don Orlando probably had relatives owning vast estates and other relatives working as servants. Some would be generals and others cooks in army canteens. The way he had spoken of her led the captain to believe she was a person of importance. Probably going to marry some big fellow up in the capital. All such people, no matter what race or nation, occupied for Captain Millerton a closely guarded realm of serene magnificence. In his own phrase, they had the brass. He himself was one of another class of humanity, who were sweating to get a little brass. Having it and getting it were fundamentally different states of existence, in the captain's view. He entertained for the comfortably wealthy classes a sort of embittered admiration and gloomy altruism. He approved of the social plutocratic orders of his day. Socialism, such as he heard spouted on College Green in Glasgow, affected him with a violent spiritual nausea. He saw no reason why men should have equal opportunities. They didn't deserve them! Who would supply the capital to give him employment if all men—and women—were equal? To him Yolanda's existence on earth, or on the *Candleshoe,* required no explanation whatever. What made him ponder the situation now was a sudden suspicion that she was not telling the whole story. If that was Bustillo the comandante who had gone out alligator shooting for target practice and if he were actually cousin to the president's wife, the fat might be in the fire after all. Gonzales the agent had a son in the government, Minister of Haciendas, and General Gonzales, who was governor of the Ortygia Department, had his eye on the presidency.

She was not telling the whole story about herself either, but of course a girl—a woman—never did. Captain Millerton was one of those men who never parade their knowledge, not because they are ashamed of it, but because they are unaware of its existence apart from the particular circumstances in which they find it of use. He was, in fact, not given to generalizing, even in irony. But he was not such a fool as to suppose that a young politico visited the house of Perkins of Striker-Perkins out of affection for Don Orlando. And a crony of the Bustillo and Gonzalez factions—hm! He looked suddenly at the face of the girl sitting on the bleached canvas seat. There would be trouble whatever a girl like that might be, he reflected. Con-

trasted against the dark teak of the bulkhead, her delicately cut features and coiled hair, under the lace, the colour of darkened amber, seemed transparent, as though of tinted alabaster and chrysolite. Her eyes, long and golden brown, were raised to his own. She clasped her knee, and the yellow robe, falling open, revealed her chemise and the full curve of her breasts. Always trouble, he said again to himself.

"What are you going to do, Señorita?"

"I wish to stay here on the boat," she said.

"You can't do that!" he broke out at once. "What for?" he asked doubtfully.

"To return," she said, looking at him steadily.

"We may be here for months," he expostulated. "Where d'you want to return to? Havana?"

"I do not care, Señor Capitan. It is only that I may escape from Don Orlando."

He took a quick glance out of the side windows and turned to her again.

"But it was to escape Don Carlos you came up here, Señorita. How do I know what you want?"

"I have told you. To remain on the ship. To return to England or North America. I do not wish to go to San Benito."

She raised her arm and pointed to the dim summits of the barrier ranges.

"Up there," she said. "For me here and here," and she touched her head and her breast, "is death."

The form of Mr. Punshon, extremely deferential, appeared vaguely at a window. Captain Millerton gave a signal of assent.

"*Muerte?*" he repeated, looking down at her in frowning incredulity.

"*Si!*" she said, and drew in her yellow robe, as though even in that close hot chamber she felt the chill of its approach.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Mr. Claxon had absorbed the full import of the consular agent's diagnosis of "the girl on the ship," they walked up the Calle del Mar toward the Plaza San Martín. The statue of that marvellous military genius, who had concluded a career of authentic glory by the remark that "the presence of a fortunate general, in the country he has conquered, is detrimental to the state," shone like a gray phantom in the mysterious light of the dawn behind the vast gaunt church. Already women and children, moving in perfect silence, as though they too were but insubstantial spirits, crept with tins and jars to the fountain in the middle of the square. Beggars who had been sleeping in the arches rolled to a sitting posture on the steps and chafed their feet. Mr. Leake, leading the way across to the telegraph office, pointed to the statue with his stick and alluded to the general's words.

"The only Latin American for whom I entertain the respect we give to our own great men," he said.

"What about this other fellow—Bolivar?" said Mr. Claxon earnestly. "They call him the Washington of South America, though it beats me how they figure it out."

"He was very like themselves, which is why they make such a fuss about him, I imagine," said Mr. Leake tartly. "Here is the office."

Mr. Claxon had been there before. He saw a bare, shabby corridor with a partition on the inner side. Two grilles, closed now by dirty yellow finger-marked ground-glass windows, showed a faint light. A tin lamp on the wall seemed forlorn in the twilight of morning and threw feeble rays upon a glistening advertisement, in vivid colours, of a Swiss chalet with a blonde girl in native costume. It hung on the unpainted plaster, an unexpected reminder of the neat scenery of the old world.

Mr. Leake, waiting while the American sent a telegram, reflected that it was the assistant manager, a Swiss socialist, who had hung up that picture. He had once worked on the

Swiss railways. Citizens of Puerto Balboa brought their friends from the country to see it. Mr. Leake had seen these candidates for liberal institutions gazing at it and crossing themselves, thinking it to be a holy picture. Mr. Leake's high-coloured features appeared sharply transparent in the light stealing across the roofs and reaching in under the old arcades of the Plaza San Martín. His thoughts, which had been engaged with Mr. Claxon's confessions, returned to them. He was really somewhat curious as to what sort of mess the man had got himself into. It might be doing him a good turn to try and get him out. Mr. Leake had no objection to the chap. He was beginning to like him. He had, under his glossy manner, a genuine personality, a sort of distorted chivalry. That girl, for instance . . .

He had said that he must send a cable to his firm. Mr. Leake wondered why firms like the Hispaniola Syndicate employed agents who knew nothing of the country. There was that *avocado* in San Benito, who represented the Syndicate and half a dozen other North American companies, a sleek, shoddy little chap who spoke good English learned while he was a clerk in the Costaraguan Consulate in New York. He was a *politico* with no real knowledge of Costaraguan company law, or any law at all. Except the law of self-preservation, thought Mr. Leake.

When Mr. Claxon came out they walked away past the Cantina Sol. The consul was about to speak when his companion pointed to the shuttered front of the café.

"She works there," he said. Mr. Leake stopped short and then went on down the street.

"I see. You're taking a long chance, old chap, to have anything to do with those people. If you're down here on business, I mean."

"Business!" said Mr. Claxon. "How in hell can a man do business in a country like this? When I was up in the capital not a soul could I see who was worth a cent. I went to that guy Alves, who's supposed to be taking care of our interests before the Commission of Review. Antonio Alves, that's the name. If you ask me, he's what we call a shyster, a crook. But what can I do? Only a qualified native attorney can act in that capacity. That's a good law, I will say, for the lawyers. So I go to see Striker himself. I have authority to offer the concession to his company. I have a proposition to make. I don't even see him. And all Alves can do is wave his hands.

Try and find him in his office before noon, eh? Business! I could have started a business and had it in running order in less time than it takes to find a lawyer in this country. Well, I come down here, on my way home, and I send my report. But I don't like to go home licked. I decide, while I'm waiting for this *Santa Brigida*, to look over the field again. You know, Mr. Leake, it probably doesn't ever become necessary for a man in your position in the country, but a business man like myself—we have to look at a proposition from all the angles. We have to get into conversation with all sorts of citizens."

"Not in the Cantina Sol," said Mr. Leake.

"Yes, in the Cantina Sol," asserted Mr. Claxon. "That's where I met the colonel."

"Colonel von Stücke?"

"That's the man. And believe you me, he gave me an earful of the history of this country."

"I bet he did! He is a well-known character. He trades a good deal on his rank in the German army, though nobody has ever yet discovered why they kicked him out. Did he tell you why he was down here?"

"Not that I recall, but I know his friend Mr. Pelham joshed him about it."

"Joshed? Pelham joshed? You mean to say you've been going round with that chap?"

"Not going round. I was a guest in his home last night."

"Guest in his home? That miserable creature has been kicked about this country for I don't know how long. We have all given him jobs, and money too, for that matter. I'm partly responsible for him being here, really. I spoke to Dr. Mirasol, the Minister of Education, a very fine man, and he appointed him to a small school we started here for the children whose fathers work on the railway. But he will be on the beach again before long. He married a native woman. She nursed him through a long bout of fever. They picked him up about a mile along the north beach. He'd been drunk three days. He owes his life to her and her family. Of course, he's done for. University man, too."

"He knows a whole lot about this country's political affiliations," said Mr. Claxon.

"You found that out, did you?" muttered Mr. Leake. They were now following a steep path between high palings of live cactus. Those strange growths, with their contorted limbs and

rounded tops, looked, in the gray light of the dawn, like lines of soldiers from some distant planet where men were born with bodies the same thickness all the way up and armoured in green mantel. Ahead of them the ground ran up to the foothills of the mountains that lay between the Corcubion and the Tortuga rivers.

"There's an example of what I mean when I say we business men have to go round and gather information from all sorts of people," said Mr. Claxon.

"You'd be well advised, my friend, to leave Pelham alone in your researches. He told you about political affiliations, eh? Did he tell you his own? Did he mention that in return for all the whisky he can drink, and that's quite a lot, he is organizing a labour union in the yard here. He didn't tell you that, of course? Or that Mr. Gonzales is supplying the whisky?"

"He certainly did not, but he made no secret of his opposition to the Liberals."

"Naturally, because the Liberals have helped him, have, in fact, done all they could to pull him out of the mud. He landed one day from the *Santa Brigida* and came to my office. He had exactly seventeen shillings and a gladstone bag containing some dirty white shirts and two bottles of whisky. Later on I had word of him being wanted at home for some cheap little swindle. But what was the use of saying anything about it? Costaragua has no extradition treaties. He had been wandering about South America for a year. Cleaned out, of course. I gave him a five-pound note to buy himself a decent suit of clothes and pay his fare to San Paulo. That's your friend Pelham. I must say you have got yourself some strange friends while you are looking over the field. You don't know perhaps, Mr. Claxon, that your company used to write to me?"

"Before my time," said Mr. Claxon.

"I dare say. They had the most extravagant ideas of the value of their concession in those days."

"Why not? The assays were extravagant. Three dollars to the cubic yard, and eighty per cent. of it platinum!" Mr. Claxon threw back his head in a challenge.

"Yes, when you've got it! Your two dollars and forty cents worth of platinum in a cubic yard will look rather small by the time you have got it to market. That's the whole trouble. The Colorado River is nothing but cataracts, rapids and bottomless gorges. Your machinery will have to be dragged on mules

over some very high mountains. And when you have reduced your ore, the bandits will take it away from you."

They had reached the front of Mr. Leake's house. Vast wreaths of vapour were swirling about the folds of the hills above them as the sun drove long lances of light across the sea. In the garden Mr. Claxon was aware of that perfect yet ephemeral beauty of the tropics—morning between the dawn and the harsh hot brightness of the day.

"You're pretty well fixed here," he said, looking about. The place had the meticulous neatness of a maiden lady's abode. Adela Leake never analyzed her feeling for the casa clearly, but it was this microscopic orderliness which had made the house odious to her.

"Come in," said Mr. Leake, thrusting the screen door open. "Give you breakfast."

Mr. Claxon, sunk in one of the great saddle-bag chairs, yawned, shut his eyes very tight, and opened them wide to look round at Mr. Leake's establishment. Pretty soft, he thought absently. He knew Mr. Leake would be surprised if he learned the nature of that cable to his firm in Nassau Street. Ah, Nassau Street! The roar of it and the crush of humans! The whoop of the tugs on the East River, the sudden stretch of the suspension bridges, the squat, comfortable friendliness of the ferries, the lofty battlements of business! He saw himself at home among all these things, mingling with the hordes of people, crushed into elevators which shot up and down the interiors of those buildings like the nerve currents in a man's body. He had, in this Englishman's sedately furnished home, a nostalgia for the tonic air of Manhattan. But not yet. Mr. Claxon's ideas, while he had been talking to the consular agent in his office, had matured. The original notion which Don Carlos Almanzor had evoked had developed, Mr. Claxon's sudden outbreak against Costaragua as a place of business was an unconscious gallery play. He always assumed this sort of protective colouring in his speech when he had an idea. When he was assistant director of that Great Southern Exposition, which the ribald northern newspapers called the Great Southern Exposure after it failed, he had used this protective device. While his trunk was already packed to get out while the getting was good, he had issued a statement to the press, giving it his mature opinion that at least seven million people would clamour for admission on opening day, and that the south was

at last on the very eve of a development unparalleled in the history of the world.

His tirade against Costaragua was a statement to the press. He didn't care a damn about Costaragua, but he cared a great deal for Reid B. Claxon and his material prosperity. His motto was still clean up and clear out. The adventures of the night, so far from creating an impression in Mr. Claxon's mind that he was in the presence of great events, or that he might be assisting in the eternal drama of the fight for human liberty, had reacted to convince him than an enlightened self-interest was the only road by which the human race would ever get anywhere. And as he looked round at the quiet luxury of Mr. Leake's living room he saw only an example of his doctrine put into practice. That was Mr. Leake's way—spend his life making a quiet fortune and go home to die. Mr. Reid B. Claxon thought he saw a more expeditious method, and his cable to the Hispaniola Syndicate was designed to set the scheme in motion. He did not intend to go home to die.

Going back, as he lay in the comfortable chair while Mr. Leake roused the servants, Mr. Claxon saw reason to trace this new idea to that moment, earlier in the evening, when he met Gina. He was sure of it. She had made him think of it. It was born blind, perhaps, but it had been born then.

He looked round. Pretty soft. He noted the piano, the encyclopædia in a revolving case, the vast flat skin of the alligator, heavily varnished, that seemed to be crawling diagonally up the inner wall. He would have a place like this, a piano, an encyclopædia, and an alligator skin. If this scheme came off. Furniture like this in the front room. These Englishmen knew what was what, all right. But he did not discern the difference between himself and the owner of these things, which lay in the fact that he himself wanted them because he saw in them a symbol of some vague ideal he called success.

And when he had enjoyed a shower and freshened himself a little, and had sat down to a wide polished mahogany table, whose silver centrepiece, filled with flowers, was reflected in the dark mirror of the surface, Mr. Claxon had made up his mind that it was worth while getting his host to assist him in carrying out his scheme. Mr. Leake, busy with a ripe mango, looked up, and after using a finger bowl wiped his fingers.

"Yes," he said, "I can give you an introduction to a good man in San Paulo. He has a fair practice among the concession-

aires and commission agents in the city. You think your people will agree?"

"They'll agree fast enough when they get that cable. The time to start a thing like this is when people are scared and ready to pull out. If the stuff could be shovelled up on the beach and carried home by the shipload, there'd be a million people in the game. Like California oil. And another thing, no matter whether the government confirms the title or not, we'll have something to cash in on. They don't confiscate without compensation. That's the only damn bit of information Alves seemed to have in his head."

"It's the only bit of information he cares about," said Mr. Leake with a slightly ironical smile. "He rather wants your concession recaptured. He can then simply deduct his commission from the compensatory grant. Thought you spotted that."

"Well, I didn't. One thing, Alves don't get any cut from this subsidiary registered in San Paulo. No, sir! Another thing I've spotted is, San Benito don't mean a thing to me. They are all dead up there. They don't live in this world at all. This Alves, now. You say he's just waiting for the concession to die so he can go to the funeral. And isn't that what they're all doing. Funerals all the time. Alves had a brother die while I was up in San Benito. He's got six brothers and a whole flock of sisters. For a week nobody sees him. Not in the office at all. Then one day I meet him on the street. He's wearing a blacker black than ever, black gloves, black tie, black cane with silver knob. He stares right through me. Face all peaked, Seems to be walking in his sleep. Now, I ask you . . ."

Mr. Leake, with some struggle, kept his face straight during this recital. It was familiar enough to him, the appalling collusion with death which distinguished the Spanish people of the old order in the upper valleys and the plateau. Alves might be what Mr. Claxon called a crook, but he belonged to that austere hierarchy of first families which in Costaragua has supplanted the Mayan priesthood of earlier days.

"Well, that's true in a way," he said. "San Paulo is the place where business is done, of course. But everybody goes up to San Benito because it is the capital of the country. It's much cooler too. That's why the Spanish people went up there first, you know: to get away from the heat. It's rather a good idea, that of yours. The trouble with the Las Esmeraldas

concession has always been that since old Don Orlando financed the prospecting—he died at Las Minas, you know; about twenty miles above Cordoba—nothing has been done because of the unsettled state of the country."

"The colonel spoke of it. Spoke of bandits, but Mr. Pelham sneered at all that sort of talk."

"Did he? He got that from Gonzales, I expect, Gonzales has always pretended there were no bandits in Costaragua. He has sold them ammunition and machetes more than once, though, to my knowledge. We shall see to-day how he takes this *Sirena* business."

"I've never seen him," said Mr. Claxon.

"A fat old fellow. Agent for several steamship lines. His son is Minister of Haciendas. His cousin is that General Gonzales who is supposed to be coming down here. An incredible tale, by the way. General Gonzales has never been below San Paulo in his life. He is what you call a cowboy."

"The young fellow told me," said Mr. Claxon. "Hard cases." He wiped his moustache and threw back his head in his declamatory way. Mr. Leake already knew that gesture and dreaded it.

"I'm certainly appreciative of the way you've treated me here as your guest, Mr. Leake," he said. He put both hands on the polished table as though about to make an address. Mr. Leake did not like this, yet he liked the man. He was going in on his own. Going to play a hunch, as he put it. It would be amusing to see what happened to him in San Paulo.

". . . as there's no time to be lost, while I'm waiting for the answers to my cables I'll just go along and get a little sleep. I feel pretty near all in."

He was up and looking for his hat, the dish of marmalade untouched where the servant had put it in front of his plate. Mr. Leake took another slice of toast.

"You ought to have a technical adviser," he said.

"Got one in mind," said Mr. Claxon briskly. "In fact, I wired him just now. On his way down from San Benito. I told him to wait for me in San Paulo. I met him up in the capital. Harvey Hannerson, Denver School of Mines."

Mr. Leake looked up and then reached for the marmalade.

"Harvey Hannerson? Really?"

"I suppose you're like all the rest of them, Mr. Leake. Harvey don't put anything over on me. But I've a hunch that Harvey will come in mighty useful to me. He's through

with Striker-Perkins. There's no future for him there."

"I shouldn't have thought there was much future for Mr. Hannerson anywhere except in an inebriate's home," said Mr. Leake, smiling.

"All right, that suits me. When I'm through with him up in Las Esmeraldas he can retire to one of those places. But I'm going to play that hunch. You'll say he's just a boozer. But he's a good geologist when he's sober. He told me there's no end o' oil in the eastern swamp back of Rio Taga only he never got anybody to back him, and it's no health resort. He's a souse all right, but he knows a lot about Costaragua. He's no fool, and neither am I."

"You seem very sure of that," said Mr. Leake, signalling for more coffee.

"Well," Mr. Claxon drawled, "will you join my company if I make it clear to you what I know about Las Esmeraldas?"

"I might," said Mr. Leake, "though I was not thinking of your business ability, Mr. Claxon."

"You think I'm making a fool of myself over this girl? I know what I'm doing there too, Mr. Leake. She's got a very fine character. I realize I've been knocking about free and easy, taking my fun where I found it, as Kipling says, and I could repeat the whole of that poem to you now."

"Don't," said Mr. Leake, putting up his hand.

"If it was lost to the world," went on Mr. Claxon. "She has confided to me the main points of her story, and if ever a fine girl had been handed a raw deal, it's her. I flatter myself I am a pretty good judge of character. I don't go by fine clothes and social position. I go by personality. Any poor lunkhead can fall hard for a dame who's all tittivated up and has a rich poppa to gratify her slightest wish. Yes, sir. And I'm frank to say that the notion of this transaction I am about to put through was due in the first place to the necessity of putting myself in a position to give this girl the assistance she so richly merits."

"Well," Mr. Leake replaced the cream pitcher full of goat's milk carefully on an oval dish. "Don't let me keep you." He had been holding the thing in the air before him, spellbound. "You'll find me in the office. You know the way down? Right."

"Christino," he said to his servant. The man's baptismal name was Jesus, but Mr. Leake had declined to use it. "What do you think of that gentleman?"

"Eh, Señor, he is, without doubt, a North American."

"Why, how do you know that, Christino?"

"Señor, when he speaks his words sing."

Mr. Leake wiped his lips, folded his napkin, and rose from the table. He turned away to hide a faint relaxing of his features. The face of Christino, the colour of an unpeeled walnut and almost as wrinkled, betrayed no consciousness of having made a humorous remark.

Upstairs, on his veranda, Mr. Leake took a long look round. He was not sleepy, but he knew that he would enjoy his siesta later on. He lowered the sun blinds that kept the morning glare from the veranda. Far away on the hard blue line of the eastern horizon a tiny speck made him use the telescope. It was the *Sirena.* Quickly he swung the tube toward the port. Over the roofs of Puerto Balboa he saw two pole masts with a wire stay between them and a faint quivering of the green shore of Strikers' Cay which indicated an invisible funnel just below. Mr. Leake smiled. That was the *Candleshoe,* of course. The *Sirena* had made off at once. He looked at her again. She was out there, stopped. He decided to go down to the dock.

While Christino was getting out a fresh suit of white linen Mr. Leake went over to his History of Costaragua. He sat down and took the pen.

. . . in his eagerness to snatch at the phantom of a political Utopia, he loses the reality of . . .

So far he had written when the *Sirena* and then Mr. Reid B. Claxon, of the United States of North America, came into his view. He stood now thinking. Then he wrote:

. . . orderly human development. He is continually betrayed into extravagant gestures and language so remote from practical discussion that the question arises whether it will ever be possible for these people, so ardent in their illusions, so helpless in the most elementary forms of self-government, to evolve into autonomous and responsible states. To those who have studied this problem at very close range for a number of years, the only possible cure for the chronic cancer which is eating into the heart of all these small countries is intervention. But this intervention must inevitably come from Europe. However we may disguise the fact or be led astray by superficial differences, the North American seems to be essentially of the same temperament, politically, as the Latin. A genius for misgovernment is the most obvious characteristic of the whole western hemisphere except in those areas such

as Canada and the New England states, where the Anglo-Saxon or French civilizations have predominated. In fact, it may be advanced, as an axiom of political philosophy, that the Monroe Doctrine, which has imposed upon Latin America for three quarters of a century virtual paralysis and sterility, must be abandoned if we are ever to witness the development of these magnificent territories. Liberty in the abstract is not only useless but destructive, and the fundamental fallacies of the Liberator have become petrified in the political systems of Latin America by the action of northern diplomacy.

As he put down the pen and glanced once more across the roofs of Puerto Balboa, Mr. Leake heard the high long-drawn-out note of the yard whistle. He saw the white feather of steam on the fitting-shop roof blowing away and vanishing instantly in the bright hot sunlight. A switching engine squealed in the yard, as though trodden on by something that bumped heavily in a series of diminishing concussions. To the right of these symbols of progress he saw the long red-tiled roof of the great church with a hole revealing the black rafters. And far away the *guardacosta,* an enigmatic dot, hung motionless beyond the blinding dazzle of the sea.

CHAPTER IV

JOSÉ BARRILLO, the proprietor of the Cantina Sol, rose very early in spite of the late hours imposed upon him by his business. On the morning of the *Sirena* raid, as it was afterward known, he heard the distant sound of Captain Bustillo's revolver. He lay for some time pondering the situation. He saw later a man on a mule go silently across the Plaza San Martín from the telegraph office and descend the Calle del Mar. He saw this through the shutters of his room over the cantina. There was nothing strange in Don Felicio, the night telegraphist, riding down to deliver a telegram to some person of affairs; but who could it be at such an early hour? And he and his wife, when she had lighted the candle by the bedside, looked at each other.

For a few minutes neither of them spoke. They knew practically everything, these two, about Puerto Balboa and the adjacent republic of Costaragua. They might even be said to know practically everything about Central America. Señora Barrillo was rarely seen by anyone save her personal friends. She was a mulatto and had had both feet crushed in a railway accident in the Isthmus. Having no feet, José would tell her, did not prevent her having a head.

José Barrillo was not a violent partisan of Liberal views. An innkeeper naturally cannot be expected to share the views of extremists. Down in Puerto Balboa most reasonable men believed in the railway, but, nevertheless, there were men with a certain amount of reason in them who took another view. They came to the Cantina Sol, and they sat and talked at the tables. They were Spanish foremen and machinists from the shops, a Portuguese electrician from the railway power station, and that night telegraphist, who was a Swiss and had once attended an international socialist convention. These men, who were not drunkards or troublesome fellows with machetes, said that no doubt the Company was a good thing for the country; but why, if Don Francisco and Don Orlando were so benevolent in their intentions, did they refuse to allow the work-

men to have a union? Yet so it was. Absolutely prohibited by order of the vice-administrador, Orlando Perkins. That Don Orlando was a hard mut! But there again it was not the province of José or Marguerite (*née* Le Blon, daughter of a Haitian Negro employed by the Canal Company) to interfere in the affairs of a caballero who paid munificently for services rendered. Indeed no.

Nevertheless, reasonable men, getting high wages, some of them, formed groups at the tables of the Cantina Sol and argued that all working men should belong to a union. To the question, what for? advanced by Don Pedro, who had a little *mercería* under the arcades, the reply was that as time passed they would find conditions changing and collective bargaining was the best. Some even maintained that conditions now could be improved, and wished to know why the Company did not object to the English *maquinistas* who sent home their dues regularly to the union in England.

José Barrillo listened to all this sort of talk in his cantina and agreed that the matter should be discussed. He listened to the comandante and the jefe policia when they alluded to the appointment of Colonel Martinez, brother of the Minister of War, to the command at San Paulo and the practical banishment of the fellow Bustillo to Rio Taga. To them it had been of the most intense interest at the time because Captain Bustillo, who was a very fine man in José's opinion, had powerful influence at the capitol. He was a cousin of Dona Carmelita the wife of the president. He was connected by marriage with Don Francisco the administrador of Striker-Perkins. Yet to make room for Colonel Martinez, he had been sent to Rio Taga. The result of the discussion was that Captain Bustillo would get back at the minister later on. The official pickings of San Paulo were considerable.

And now, during the last few weeks, the news percolating into the upper part of the Cantina Sol, where Señora Barillo hobbled about on her heavy crutches and directed her household, which consisted of two dirty little girls, had been more and more significant. Ever since Don Orlando, down from the capitol on his way to New York, had ridden by on horseback and signalled José to follow, there had been a tenseness in the attitude of the Barrillos toward the patrons of the Cantina Sol. José had got on his mule and, lighting a cigar, had ambled off, apparently without any aim, save to take the air. He had turned

back along the Calle Potosi and, later, catching sight of Don Orlando far up the road which finally ran out of the town in the direction of the river, followed at a prudent interval. Once or twice, moving to one side to allow a string of donkeys, loaded with hay, to go by, or countrymen, bent double, with a vast erection of earthenware jars miraculously balanced on their backs, he lost sight of Don Orlando altogether. But he knew that the road died away later to a mere trail which followed the river up to Lake Cristobal, and then, after passing round the lake, joined the main trail from Cordoba to Rio Taga.

And it was the interview which followed that he remembered now, sitting on the bed beside his wife and discussing in whispers the underworld of Puerto Balboa. He had caught up with Don Orlando at a tiny *pulqueria* beside the track, a hut of mud bricks thatched with palmetto leaves. There was a high, shaded stoop in front, with a table and two broken chairs. Two peons, with handkerchiefs on their heads under jipi-japa hats, had risen hastily and lifted those hats in reverence as Don Orlando waved them out of the road with his riding switch.

José Barrillo, who had lived among his own people at Cordoba, looked into the unglazed window and ordered young coconut milk. The landlord of the *pulqueria* shoved children, chickens, and dogs off the porch and hastily brought the large green fruit and glasses.

"What do you suppose he would want to bring all those Isthmians here for?" he had asked Marguerite that night. "Is he going to dig a canal through Costaragua? Six hundred, *por Dios!*"

That was what Don Orlando had had to say to him. Six hundred men like José himself except that they had not won a heavy prize in the lottery; but all with big silver pay days, potential purchasers of food, drink, and tobacco, would arrive on the *Santa Brigida* from Colon. And he, José Barrillo, was to take charge of them while they were in the town, establish friendly relations with the bosses, who were to be treated to plenty good aguardiente and German cerveza. Stores and section huts were coming on the big ship from England. But he was to say a word to nobody.

He, José Barrillo, was then given certain special and particular instructions as regarding the comandante and jefe policia. They were to be made much of at the Cantina Sol and taken into the landlord's confidence. José understood, of course,

what that meant. They were to be told that the Company had them in view for certain comfortable billets later on. They were to do nothing conflicting with their official duties, but to rest assured that nevertheless they would be taken care of. These hints were to be dropped as coming from a very high quarter. He was then to point out, in the course of those long desultory conversations which he enjoyed with those two gentlemen, that the government at San Benito was taking a short sighted view in dealing with the bandits that were roaming through the southern part of the republic. Instead of exterminating them, they were merely driving them toward the sea. That made the outlying parts of the plateau safe; but how about the coastal regions and the mountains on the southern frontier, where he, Don Orlando, now owned many thousand of hectares? Small punitive expeditions only made the bandits form larger companies, and they were very strong already to the north of the Colorado River. He, José, would know how to make it seem that he had authoritative information about this. And he could ask his friends, wonderingly, where those thieves got their ammunition. Only the other day, outside Cordoba, a man was found shot, and the bullet was out of a new Mannlicher rifle, the latest pattern. José was to rub that in.

All these details Marguerite (*née* Le Blon) was aware of as she lay listening to José's low-toned remarks after he had seen Don Felicio go down the Calle del Mar. She also knew that Don Ricardo Gonzalez, whose son, the Minister of Haciendas, sent him frequent telegrams (in code, according to Don Felicio) gave that little Englishman, the *maestro de escuela,* unlimited credit in ordering whisky. Unlimited. He probably never paid for it at all. Furthermore, she knew, because José had given them to her for safety, her husband himself had received from time to time letters marked, *MINISTRO DE HACIENDAS,* such as came to all who owned land. Marguerite had persuaded José to buy a place along the beach. She called it the Casa Bellavista, and José had been offered a good sum by the comandante and jefe policia for it. They wanted to make it what they called "a good house" and put that Italian woman in charge of it. But the letters did not concern themselves with the Casa Bellavista. They came from a certain Don Venustiano Alvarado, a clerk in the ministry, and told José what to do in such and such a case. Don Venustiano was,

like José himself, a trusted but not-too-trusted man of Don Orlando's. He was very poor, being one of the innumerable Alvarados into whose family that great Anglais, Don Orlando Senior, had married. José was of the opinion that Don Venustiano was really watching the Minister Gonzalez. Don Orlando was very thick with General Martinez, the Minister of War. And there were two sides to that question, Maguerite told José. Don Hernando, the president, would not last forever. It was the Ministry of Haciendas which issued concessions, and young Gonzalez had denounced in public the financial operations of Senator Orlando Perkins while holding office. Marguerite had read the reports in *El Mundo* to José, who could not read at all, except the figures on a lottery ticket, for instance.

No, Don Hernando would not last forever. He was not a strong man politically or physically. He had tried to hold back both Conservatives and Liberals. And nobody was satisfied. The old families, the agricultural population of the high valleys, emboldened by his timidity, were growing more and more critical in the House of Deputies. The Liberals, led by Don Orlando and General Martinez, were advocating "a strong policy." They inspired articles in *El Diario* urging the carrying of the railway up to San Benito, "opening up the country to industrial advancement," "extension of privileges to foreign capital," and "the abolition of export duties."

José and his Marguerite knew all this was going on, not as partisans, for José was very much of a cosmopolitan, but as alert camp followers of Don Orlando. That conversation in the little pulqueria had caused José many hours of moody abstraction behind his bar. He had seen that German colonel, who was another of Don Orlando's men, in conversation with a stranger gringo from the Pension Francia. José had given Gina the tip, and she had got acquainted with him very quickly.

"But she told me he was nothing, just a salesman, a *vendedor,* who was waiting for the *Santa Brigida,*" he said, and his wife had made no comment. She had only looked at him with a peculiar expression on her face.

"Don't begin that, wife," he said. "Gina is like me. She has an object in life. She wants to get back to her *Niña* in Havana. And I have told you what she said of that place, how it is full of gaiety and American spenders of money. Well, José and Marguerite could do well there."

Marguerite, who had been a cantina girl herself at Sweeny's

Café in Colon, did not deny this. She spoke very softly nowadays, since the mutilation of her body, the horse running away and the carriage overturning just as a train was backing into the station. It was as though her life had been in her movement and attractiveness, in the play of her large handsome limbs, the sound of her rich, husky voice in the catchy French and Spanish songs. Now that was over she symbolized the end of her real life in the quietness of her tones.

She did not believe Gina was trying to steal her husband, but she could not resist the idea. She knew, as José was always saying, that Gina was a girl of character who had abandoned "her way of life." But she also knew that women with character steal husbands as well as *cocottes* and *filles de joie*. Their methods were different. They got hold of men by inspiring them with respect and admiration. Good girls, Marguerite knew, work as much havoc in the world as the worthless ones. Perhaps more. Every time José came up to see her, in his dutiful way, she watched for the change she suspected in him. When he spoke of Gina in a manly disinterested way, and the sound of the automatic piano, a faint tinkle accompanied by a vibration of the bedsprings—Marguerite thought of Gina downstairs dancing with the customers, singing songs, and carrying round the drinks.

For a few moments neither of them had spoken, while José pulled on his clothes. They were thinking of the letter from Don Venustiano Alvarado which had come down two days before. Young Don Carlos Almanzor, who had been in prison for complicity in Agrarian disorders, had suddenly turned up in Rio Taga. The government, of course, would take the necessary steps if any filibuster was attempted, but José was to warn Don Orlando personally of the young man's possible presence in the seaports. Don Carlos was known to have a personal grudge. When Marguerite read this to José he had asked as he rolled a cigarette: "Does he think Don Orlando will alter his plans for that young man?"

Now he rolled another cigarette and made up his mind to have a word and a cup of coffee with Don Felicio. Like many socialists of José's acquaintance in Panama, the Swiss was talkative. It was as though he made up by this rapid declamatory verbiage for his long hours of solitary silence taking down the code messages he did not understand from people he had

never seen. If Don Felicio could be said to have an object in life, it was to be a professional talker. He was now an enthusiastic amateur. He also had coffee all through the night in the back office, to keep him awake. José had more than once had early news from the capital and San Paulo when conversing with Don Felicio in the small hours.

He looked at Marguerite as he opened the door.

"I will bring you up a cup, wife," he said.

Downstairs, in the darkness of the shuttered café, which he traversed with a lighted candle, he heard footsteps. Tiptoeing to the door, he looked through a crack and saw Señor Leake, the consular agent, and the gringo from America del Norte, leaving the telegraph office, which abutted on José's corner of the Plaza. José blew out his candle.

"The saints!" he muttered in his moustache. "I would not have thought that! Where have they sprung from all of a sudden?"

As he watched them cross the street toward him and vanish round the corner, he strove to discover in his memory something that would explain this unexpected development.

"Out all night," he reflected, though he knew Señor Leake too well to believe it.

He slid back the bolts and stepped out into the coolness of the arcade. He inhaled cigarette smoke, expelled two long jets into the air, and walked quietly across the street.

"*Hola, amigo!*" he said, softly, pushing the inner door of the telegraph room.

A blond young man with a large green shade over his eyes, held in place with a piece of greater elastic, looked up from the instrument table. He had a long face made longer by a pointed beard. Near by a charcoal stove bore a brass pot with a long handle. Don Felicio made a quick gesture of salutation and went on writing to the attendant spasmodic clatter of the telegraph. José Barrillo sat down slowly by the stove and waited, his mournful gaze upon the bent fingers. On the walls, in the shadow thrown up by the shades of the lamps, were posters bearing legends in German and Italian and French. They were attached to designs showing semi-nude workmen with noble faces and bulging muscles, their eyes gazing into a golden vista, while about them were wheels and cogs and vague mechanical shapes. José looked at them with temperate respect. Accord-

ing to Don Felicio the workers were continually rising and casting off their chains in these countries.

Suddenly the blond young man swung round, the clicking grew louder and more spasmodic, and he waved a sheet of yellow paper. His pale eyes had a look of harsh secular eagerness and triumph as he crackled the paper.

"What is it, *amigo?*" asked José, smoking.

"You ask?" said the telegraphist with a grimace. "News of the most important. For the . . ." He shaped the consonants of the word "comandante" with his lips. He leaned his head on his hand and regarded the telegram with a gloomy pride.

"Ah, the comandante. You are busy this morning, *amigo.*"

"We will have coffee," said Don Felicio. He leaned over José and spoke rapidly into the innkeeper's ear while his hand lifted the coffee pot. José looked at him with intensity.

"Everybody will know as soon as it is light," said the telegraphist, pouring coffee into small cups without handles. "Everybody. But not a word."

"San Paulo is safe," said José.

"*Si.* But the army of General Gonzales has escaped across the Corcubion and holds the Cordoba-Rio Taga Road. They command the river, and no boats can get up to the capital. You understand Colonel Martinez is coming down with five hundred troops to secure the port. The comandante is to prepare to receive them. Here is a telegram from General Martinez, the minister."

"*Amigo,* this morning early—very early, I think—I heard a rifle or a gun fired. I sleep lightly."

Don Felicio nodded and scratched his elbow while he suddenly yawned.

"Tchah! *Si!* The *Sirena,* the *guardacosta,* is in the hands of the revolutionists. This morning the *Sirena* came in, Captain Bustillo landed, captured the soldiers and disarmed them, locking them up in the barracks. He then went to the house of the comandante, arrested him, and imprisoned him in the calabozo. He then went to the house of Ricardo Gonzales and took him off to the *Sirena.* When this telegram came and I went down to deliver it, the soldiers had got out and released the comandante. José, he is an angry man! The *Sirena* has gone to sea again. It will now be impossible to attack Rio Taga by sea. The army will have to take the trail, and that is held by the revolutionists. Eh! Not a word, José!"

"*Si,* I understand, *amigo.* This is news, eh!" José whistled softly. Escaped! Those hard-riding *llaneros* were over the river. José's mind gave a jump. They would be in touch with El Chico, the bandit, in a few days. News travelled swiftly in the bush.

He drank the strong black stuff with relish. He wished Don Orlando were here now to tell him what to do. Costaragua was cut in two by allowing the Agrarian filibusteros to get over the pass through the Camagua gorge and across the Corcubion. The plateau was cut off. They would probably cut the telegraph wires between San Paulo and Cordoba. They might . . .

"*Amigo,*" he said, looking sombrely at Don Felicio, the international Socialist. "You think there is any chance of the revolutionists getting into Puerto Balboa."

The telegraphist raised his shoulders and depressed the corners of his mouth. One of the advantages of being an internationalist was that you have no anxiety about your job. Don Felicio knew that the only other man this side of San Paulo who could use a Morse key was the Englishman in the railway telegraph office, and the revolutionists wouldn't use him. They would probably shoot him, Don Felicio reflected.

"With the *Sirena* in their possession, José, they will have one foot in the river and the other in the sea. Their centre will——" He glanced across at the shiny map of Costaragua on the wall. "You see? On Lake Cristobal. General Gonzales," he lowered his voice to a faint whisper, "General Gonzales has shown himself a commander of extraordinary skill. The filibuster at Rio Taga was never intended for anything but a feint." He studied the map intensely. "Sea, lake, and river! Genius! And if he marches down to Puerto Balboa his right flank is protected by water all the way. The Tortuga River, you see," he waved his pencil and stuck the end in his mouth. Suddenly he yawned again and reached for the coffee.

"Señor Leake was here just now," said José, standing up. Don Felicio stared and shook his head.

"No." He glanced at the papers on his desk. "An Americano del Norte brought a cable. In code, for New York. You saw them? Señor Leake? Well, he is all right. General Gonzalez will probably treat Señor Leake with particular consideration."

"He will not treat the Cantina Sol with particular considera-

tion," muttered José. "Don Ricardo will tell him that my place is the Company's junta. I don't ask my customers what politics they have, but it will be all the same to Don Ricardo. I wish Don Orlando was here."

"There is something in favour of the government," said Don Felicio, seating himself at his table again and laying his hand on the Morse key. "Gonzalez has no artillery, no railway, and the rains are coming."

"You think the *llaneros* care a single centavo for the rains?" said José.

"Very much will they care," replied the telegraphist with a bright, hard glance. "They are from the highlands. They will get fever in the low parts round Rio Taga and Lake Cristobal. They have no medical staff, José *mio*. Colonel Martinez will advance rapidly, no doubt, and if he drives in their centre, they will be cut in halves."

"Well, *amigo*, we live in days when nobody knows what is going to happen," said José Barrillo. "This has been getting ready for a long time, no doubt, eh?"

Don Felicio waved his left hand, elevated his shoulders, and caressed his blond pointed beard. The key began to vibrate. José cast a solemn look round and went out very quietly, a cup of coffee in his hand.

As he crossed the street the bells of the church banged and reverberated to the blows of the sacristan in the tower. Down the Calle del Mar hurried the workmen to the railway shops. And as he ascended to the arcade in front of his establishment he saw Gina in an old yellow dress and with an orange silk handkerchief round her head, opening the heavy shutters of the Cantina Sol. He moved carefully to avoid spilling the coffee. He paused in the doorway and cast his eyes upon the girl, who had an iron table under each strong shapely arm.

"Gina *mia*," he said softly, "there will be much business to-day. Set out all the tables. Open the last barrel of the *cerveza baviera*. We shall need it all to-day."

"A ship coming in?" she asked, stopping in front of him.

"*Si*, who knows? And officers from San Paulo, Gina. You look very pretty this morning, Gina."

"I?" She gave him a full stare and then uttered a faint "Humph!"

He took up the coffee from the bar where he had set it down.

"Well, we understand each other, Gina. We have each an object in life."

"*Si,*" she said, shoving the tables with a clang upon the sidewalk. "Do not keep the señora waiting for her coffee. If it is cold, I shall have a fire in a few minutes."

"Gina, you are a good girl. One of these days . . ."

"*Si, si!*" she shrilled softly, giving him another glance, a triumphant challenge, from her black eyes. "And it will be very soon, José *mio!*"

CHAPTER V

I'VE never known it to fail, never," said Captain Millerton. It was characteristic of him to stand near the poop rail of his ship without leaning on it. The most that he ever did in the way of leaning was to rest his elbow for a moment against a stanchion. Captain Millerton, except when he was at table or lying on his bed in his cabin, was never at rest. He kept up a ceaseless movement of some kind, minute yet definite. Now he stood close to the rail and raised himself on his toes as he drew on his cigar. He was talking to Mr. Punshon, who grasped the top rail in his powerful pudgy hands and looked across the water of the harbour at Puerto Balboa.

What the captain had said about women on board ship evoked only a rumbling noise from the throat of his chief officer. Captain Millerton had never known a case where the presence of a woman on board a ship failed to disorganize everything.

"If I've seen it once I've seen a dozen times," he continued in a low tone. "Everything upset by some skirt." He took a step away from Mr. Punshon and returned. "And now here, when the Lord knows there's trouble enough . . ."

The sun, at ten o'clock in the morning, overtopped the line of trees along the middle of Strikers Cay, and the *Candleshoe* threw a broad shadow over the transparent green water on the shoreward side. The awning protected the captain and his mate as they contemplated the distant jetty with its rusty steam crane now emitting a long smear of black smoke. Behind that lay Puerto Balboa, glittering in the sunlight against the green heights of the foothills and the red mass of La Silla, while against the blue of the western sky were shapes of darker azure enshrouded in faint vapours or scarred with rapidly moving black clouds out of which came sudden silent explosions of electric flame.

Captain Millerton had brought his ship into the harbour unaided, having been there less than a year before, and anchored in the shadow of the Cay. He had received a visit immediately from the harbour master and the jefe of the customs, who had

given him the news. When he heard that Don Ricardo Gonzales, of Gonzales & Co., agents for Harkelaw, Govanlock & Co., had been on board the *Sirena* that morning, Captain Millerton announced that he would remain at anchor until he heard from his owners. The two Costaraguans, seated in the cabin and eating heavily, heard him without emotion. They told him that the comandante would wait for Colonel Martinez and escort that officer on board. And Captain Millerton, who had been watching through the telescope the slow movement, accompanied by piercing, long-drawn shrieks of a train, was waiting for the official visit.

It was painful suspense for Captain Millerton. He was, for the time, thrown on his own resources of fortitude. He had to deal with Striker-Perkins; and what, to a seaman, was Striker-Perkins? In spite of what Orlando Perkins had said of Gonzales and his affiliations, Captain Millerton had imagined that an agent was always an agent. The revolution must be a big, carefully planned affair, after all.

And on top of all this, the girl in the spare cabin wanted to remain on board.

Mr. Punshon, taking a look through the telescope that lay on a rack inside the cabin scuttle, reported a party coming down to the jetty. The harbour master was escorting them to the boat.

There had been a time long, long ago when Captain Millerton would have been extravagantly elated at the presence on his ship of a beautiful foreign girl like Yolanda de Mara. He didn't have a ship of his own then, he reflected. He had seen such women at a distance, and knowing how unattainable they were to third mates who had run away from their ships, to casual adventurers under the dubious flag of Guzman Blanco, he had cultivated an attitude of cynical antagonism. It had grown with the years into a species of class consciousness. He called them, to himself, passengers. He meant that they were passengers in the world and that he, as one of the crew, could not afford to have anything to do with them. Mrs. Millerton had the same point of view, the point of view of the sutlers, the camp followers, and the flunkeys of the world.

He would have been elated. Even now he remembered the expression on her face as she uttered that word *"muerte"* in the chart room. He was aware of and on guard against her influence. He would have nothing in the world interpose between

himself and the money he was going to get for running the *Candleshoe*. He had no objection to the girl staying on the ship save that, as he said to Mr. Punshon, it seemed utterly impossible for a woman, especially a young and pretty one, to be on a ship alone without getting the men at loggerheads. And he did not want Orlando Perkins to find fault when he arrived. He was practically the owner of the *Candleshoe* and the girl too. Captain Millerton, as he listened to those two Costaraguans describing the exploits of Captain Bustillo in Puerto Balboa, shutting the comandante up in his own calabozo and immediately making off with the idea of capturing Don Orlando and the girl, was troubled with no interest at all in the political unrest of Costaragua. He wanted to clean up and clear out. They were all bandits, in his opinion. And he told them plainly that the ship and her cargo remained at anchor until he got something definite.

The boat, with a white awning over the stern, was beginning to crawl across the harbour, lifting deliberately on the swell. Captain Millerton heard the mate's deep rumbling tones and turned to see him addressing Yolanda. She stood in the entry of the cabin stairway, dressed in a short white muslin frock with small sprigs of green in its texture. Her stockings were of white cotton of French make, and her shoes of white kid. She stepped out, carrying a fan and a lorgnon of mother of pearl and gold. Captain Millerton saw her smile at Mr. Punshon, who resembled a red-faced old bird hovering about her, making gestures as though assisting her over the coaming. She was very different from the anxious creature in the yellow silk robe who had sat looking up at him in the chart room. She had put rice powder on her face and painted her lips heavily with vermilion. She had marked her eyebrows with a black pencil. And her bronze-coloured hair above that artificial mask—the conventional mask of the señoritas of Costaragua—gave an extraordinary vitality to that mask, as if she were a woman from another planet, where such colouring was natural. She pointed to the boat coming slowly, in spite of two rowers.

"Who comes?" she asked. "The comandante?"

"And the colonel from San Paulo, Martinez," said the captain, doubling up the end of his beard. He turned to the mate.

"Mr. Punshon, get the men along to fend off at the gangway. She'll swamp if she gets under the foot of it."

"Captain," said Yolanda in Spanish, "I know that man; we

have met in San Benito. I shall remain here with you. He is not to be trusted."

He did not look at her for a moment. The glance he had already taken alarmed him. In spite of his old-time familiarity with the customs of Caracas in the days of Guzman Blanco, he was suddenly prejudiced against Yolanda by this adoption of her national customs. He was nervous as she came close to him, and he puffed at his cigar hurriedly to get it going again. He was nervous because he knew that if she threw herself upon his protection he would give it to her.

"I don't intend to trust him," he said.

"He is *perfido,*" she returned, "to women."

"Oh, to women! That's nothing unusual, Señorita. It is what we meet with every day in the week. The only thing to do is to keep out of his way."

"How is that possible? He will know I am here. Now that he is in command he has much power. He will expect me to go to the Pension Francia. But I shall stay here."

"Señorita, you fear all men," he said slowly. She turned from regarding the shore and the white-awninged boat, and Captain Millerton saw into the depths of her eyes, which were the colour of brown seaweed beneath green sunlit water.

"Señor Capitan, that has been my life since I was small. Is it my fault? The *caballeros* think, because I am protected by Don Orlando, a man who protects many women, that I am a girl of no character. The rich gringos in New York," she shrugged her shoulders, "think all Spanish women are bad. They follow us along the street. Señorita, Señorita, Señorita!" she mimicked.

"They misunderstand, I expect," he muttered in English, glancing at her heaving breasts and the seductive beauty of her face. "Then you ought to marry a good *caballero,* Señorita." he went on in Spanish. "Then you won't be afraid any more. You will have security."

"Well, and who?" she looked over the rail at the boat coming alongside. "Señor Capitan, I have asked a man, an Inglez on your ship, to marry me. I, Yolanda de Mara, an Olivares, because of the misery of my fortune, have asked him."

"Eh? Who? What did he tell you?" Captain Millerton suddenly was flustered. Already! he said to himself. But who? "You don't mean the young fellow you asked me about? Good

gracious! You asked him? And, Señorita, I'll be bound he was staggered. Tck!"

Captain Millerton moved a little away from the rail. He took several brisk steps and halted, staring at the Red Ensign, which he could just see beyond the ice box. That, he thought suddenly, would be coming down and the yellow and red of Costaragua would go up. The story Yolanda had told him reminded him of the men on the *Candleshoe* who might or might not elect to remain with him. He could not hold them against their will. He knew that no man could be held against a change of flag; but he had avoided thinking of the prospect before him. He had nursed a secret conviction that somehow the men would be persuaded to sign again without demanding impossible wages. And now that the girl had told him about that young fellow, who had a second's certificate anyhow, he reflected upon the way Mr. Barker and his trusty henchmen would take it. And then Captain Millerton turned to find Yolanda de Mara had vanished, while up the short ladder from the well deck came a broad figure in white uniform with epaulettes of solid gold lace and a row of medals dangling from ribbons on his breast.

Behind him came the comandante with his one silver medal on a red ribbon that seemed to be the eye he had lost from the right-hand socket. He came up and at once moved out from behind Colonel Martinez to make the introduction.

Nobody would have believed Captain Millerton had ever worn a naval uniform. The fact was he regarded all that as behind him. He had no pride in his past, for until he entered Harkelaw, Govanlock's employ he had had very little to be proud of. He now wore an old yellow tunic and pants, very shiny from much laundering, brown canvas shoes, and an old golf cap.

"Capitan, this is Colonel Martinez in command of the army arrived this morning from San Paulo. He wishes to take over your ship."

"Come below," said Captain Millerton in English. "Steward," he shouted down the scuttle, "stand by!"

"This hombre is like all the rest of the Inglez," growled Colonel Martinez in Spanish to his companion as he bent his head to enter the cabin scuttle.

"Careful, Your Excellency! The capitan understands you."

"And he will not care at all," said the colonel, stopping in the curve of the stairway and looking up. "That is the way of these people. They would order the president himself about."

He descended and looked about him in the cabin. Colonel Martinez had had very little experience of ships. He was feeling queasy already owing to the motion of the boat. He took a large silk handkerchief from his sleeve and held it before his mouth. He saw the steward Rafael Alvarez closing a cabin door. And then his eye fell on the decanters.

He was a man of full-blooded personality, following the fortunes of his more able brother. Left to himself, Colonel Martinez would have remained a simple lieutenant, fond of good liquor and the girls, equal to barrack life in the towns of the interior and occasional punitive expeditions against the Indians of the frontier. Even now he was unaware that he had a job too big for him. He could perceive both virtue and valour without esteeming either, for he was preoccupied with the importance of his family. Between himself and Miguel Lopenco, the governor of the province, an astute wire puller who had been appointed by the president on the strength of his dignified deportment, there existed a perfect understanding. Beneath their dissimilar exteriors they were very much the same in their morals. Officers and under officials with handsome wives and daughters were sure of promotion to the city of San Paulo.

Up in the capitol, the colonel, then a major on his brother's staff, had met Yolanda de Mara. The unusual had for him an irresistible attraction. As an ensign he had kept a half-caste girl with bright coppery woolly hair and blue-green eyes. And Yolanda's personal beauty had drawn him to the Casa Mirador, to tertulias and receptions, even to church. Knowing Don Orlando's ways of life, he had assumed that Yolanda would appreciate the favoured brother of the Minister of War as a lover. After the brown girls of the quarter, who were unable to read, and were like little animals in their naïve craving for sweets and pesos, that girl with the golden helmet and the red beautiful mouth, the girl with eyes that changed like shadows passing over a pool, had shaken him. And then suddenly, at a word from Don Orlando, General Martinez had made a place for his brother at San Paulo.

"It is hands off, Juan." Angelo Martinez had said to the sullen major. "Don Orlando himself said these words." And young Bustillo, bumptious cadet of that famous family, had been sent away to Rio Taga. But Colonel Martinez had not forgotten. He was uniformly successful with his affairs. He had been compelled to submit and console himself with the blonde wife

of an old Austrian importer in San Paulo. He knew that Angelo was working hand in glove with Don Orlando. When the time came, Juan himself would be Minister of War. Was not that worth giving up a dangerous game?

He was a handsome man by contrast with the comandante. Colonel Martinez wore his hair short in the manner of America del Norte, parted in the middle and brushed past the ears. He had a short black moustache instead of the soft side-burns, surmounted by a curly pomatumed coiffeur, of his brother, worn in imitation of General Sucre. He took the utmost care of his hands, and his small feet were invariably encased in expensive mess boots imported through Leake & Co. from England.

His black eyes examined the cabin as he stood at the foot of the stairs, blocking the entrance. Sensitive to feminine things, his long Castilian nose snuffed the blend of odours. He noted a corner of the curtain caught in the closed door of the cabin on the left. Again he twitched his nose and turned to the comandante. He could see the captain's feet descending behind them.

"He has his wife here?" he muttered.

"No, Excellency; how can that be?"

"I smell perfume."

He eyed the decanters again and stepped forward. He sank down on the cushions of the settee where Yolanda had eaten her meals and brought his attention round to the business of the moment. A soldier, who wore boots and had a uniform of blue serge, came awkwardly down the stairway with a large attaché case under his arm. He stood, very perspiring, his cap in his hand, looking at the three men seated about the table. He saw Rafael Alvarez bring in a tray of green bottles like boluses, rolling on their sides, bottles which contained *agua de soda,* and thick satisfying glasses. He saw him go into the captain's room and bring out some old shagreen letter files and a box of Havana cigars.

"Señores," said the comandante, taking the attaché case from the soldier and dismissing him with a gleam from his one eye. "Señores, we have to arrange immediately, on the authority of the Minister of War and the administrador of the Central Railway of Costaragua, for the transport of troops to Rio Taga by this ship."

He opened the case and drew out a clip of large papers with engraved headings and laid them before the captain. Colonel

Martinez, pouring out a half glass of whisky, motioned to Rafael Alvarez to open a bottle of soda water. He took a cigar and trimmed it with an English penknife. As he slipped the knife back into his pocket, he stopped and picked up a small handkerchief from the floor under the table. Captain Millerton, sitting opposite, his elbows on the table, saw the colonel hold the thing to his nose.

"*Si,*" said the colonel, as though refreshed. "Take the cargo out at once and take the army to Rio Taga. There is the authority."

Captain Millerton drew the papers to him and read them rapidly. Most of them were official and brief. There was a blank tonnage certificate of the republic, evidently lugged from a dusty pigeonhole where it had been reposing for years. It was headed *Republica de Costaragua por la Constitución.* And there was a letter, not yet opened, addressed to himself, to *Señor Capitan Enrico Millerton, El Vapor Candleshoe, Puerto Balboa.* He looked again at the two officials helping themselves to whisky and cigars. The colonel had dropped the handkerchief, which was trimmed with a narrow band of lace, on the corner of the table. It looked very conspicuous on the dark red cloth. Captain Millerton saw Rafael Alvarez, hovering behind the comandante, glance at it and reach impulsively to take it. The colonel's hand came down hard on the steward's with a bang.

"Do you want me to order your arrest?" he snarled harshly. "Let it alone, you!"

Captain Millerton thrust his thumb into the flap of the letter. In spite of the importance of it, for he could see it was from the administrador of the Ferrocarril Central, his mind reverted for a flash to the girl behind the bulkhead against which Colonel Martinez was leaning, sending large puffs of cigar smoke toward the skylight. The action of the colonel in picking up the handkerchief, holding it to his nose while glancing sharply at the comandante, the very way in which he dropped it, struck the captain as confirming what Yolanda had told him. He agreed with her! he suddenly reflected. A decent woman hadn't a chance with these swine. He saw what she would be up against if she went into the country unprotected. He even understood a little of the mood in which she had turned to that young fellow to . . .

He took out the letter.

To his relief it was written in English. He did not tackle

Spanish script very well after all these years. His eye caught salient phrases as it ran through the lines . . . the purchase of a vessel was decided upon recently . . . in view of opening a regular run to New York . . . coffee and sisal . . . Messrs. Harkelaw, Govanlock give you a good name . . . remain in our service for a period of one year. . . .

The letter continued:

We have to advise that political events in this country render it absolutely necessary for us to support the government which has always protected and encouraged our investments against the reactionary element. The Minister of War has requested the use of your ship to carry troops along the coast in order to deal with an outbreak which threatens the railway and also the communication with the capital. In fact, there is a danger that if the revolutionary forces are able to prevent troops from the capital reinforcing Colonel Martinez at San Paulo, a serious disaster may occur and years of progress be destroyed.

My partner, Don Orlando Perkins, who carried out the transactions relating to the purchase of your ship through Barinas & Co. of Havana, through his political affiliations, was able to foresee the present events. In fact many of us in touch with the government of Costaragua believed that with the approach of the elections a revolution would begin. Don Orlando has taken the necessary measures. On his arrival on the *Santa Brigida* from Colon he will take full charge.

The agent for Harkelaw, Govanlock & Co., Don Ricardo Gonzales, for family reasons is actively engaged with the revolutionary partida and will be no longer available. The consular agent, Señor Leake of Leake & Co. will act for the consignees and as our agent in Puerto Balboa.

The Minister of War, General Angelo Martinez, regards it as very desirable for the safety of the ship that you remain in command and that you have a free hand in retaining or discharging the crew. With the change of ownership their contracts expire and those who wish to return to England shall be provided with free passages. The manager of the railway shops at Puerto Balboa reports a number of his men available. As the ship is intended to run regularly to New York in the future this arrangement meets with our approval. Kindly make all engagements through Señor Leake.

Permit me to say in conclusion that the Company as well as the Minister of War will be pleased to make a generous acknowledgment of your services in this special crisis.

Captain Millerton, rapidly reading through this dry, precise document, signed "for Striker-Perkins, Ltd., Francis Striker, Managing Director," folded it up and put it in his pocket. "Generous acknowledgment" were the words which vibrated in his mind as he folded his arms and looked at Colonel Martinez,

who had placed Yolanda's handkerchief on the other corner of the table, as though for safety.

"You have a passenger, Captain?" he said, inclining his head a little toward it.

"Eh? Well, that's all right," said Captain Millerton, looking at the handkerchief. "Her passage was paid."

"I know," said the colonel, nodding. "By Don Orlando. . . . I am a friend of Señorita Yolanda."

"So she told me," said the captain, looking the man in the eye.

"Ah, she told you? Well, as a friend of Don Orlando I will see that she is conducted in safety to San Paulo."

"So she told me," repeated the captain. "She told me all about you."

Colonel Martinez rose to his feet.

"Don't become excited," said the captain. "Don Orlando put the lady in my care, not yours. I did not ask for the trouble of it. But he is the owner, not you. If she wants to stay on the ship until we are discharged, she has my permission."

Colonel Martinez slowly sank into his seat again. The comandante's single eye roved from one to the other, and he made a noise in his throat.

"Excellency," he began, but the colonel stopped him. He pointed a finger at the captain.

"You begin by insubordination?" he said.

"I tell you I take orders from these papers," said the captain, slapping them several times. "When the ship is ready for your men you can bring them on board. But you can't play tricks on me. I was with Guzman Blanco, in '84. You can't tell me anything about dictators, Colonel. I know all the twenty-one moves."

"What do you mean?" bellowed the man at the other end of the table. "You mean you want this girl for yourself?"

"Yes, if you like to put it that way," said the captain quietly. "You would have no say in the matter. I am responsible to Don Orlando, not to you. But I'll tell you what I mean. You are not a revolutionary general, out to loot. This ship, until the papers are signed by the consular agent and the alcalde and countersigned by the president, is under the Red Ensign. And the señorita can do as she pleases, for all I care. She had your acquaintance in San Benito, she told me, Colonel."

"You defy me!" said the colonel, rising again.

"Oh, no. I never defy anybody," said Captain Millerton,

grinding his cigar stub into an ash tray and drawing out a fresh cheroot from his pocket. "Don't have to. I'm in command of this ship, that's all."

"I will report your conduct to my brother, the Minister of War."

"All right. Tell him I was a naval officer under Guzman Blanco. Tell him Don Orlando's *doña* demanded protection from the officers of the army. I can report as well as you, Colonel, don't forget."

Captain Millerton spoke loudly with intention. He knew the girl would hear him. Colonel Martinez moved to the stairway. Only as he halted there did he turn slowly, his dark olive-coloured face, with its black eyes and long nose, working under the stress of his emotions. It had just come to him that the captain had been shouting to let the girl hear. The thought that she was listening suddenly sapped his fortitude, for he was nothing but pride. He had no real knowledge of war or of life. He was merely the brother of an influential man.

"Come," he said in a low tone to the comandante. "Why did you bring me here to be insulted by this gringo? Let the agent have the ship ready for the troops to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" echoed the captain. "How do you think we can discharge four thousand tons in one half day? With one crane on the dock! Where are your cargadors? It's machinery, most of it—very heavy."

He followed them up on deck, talking to them all the way, sure of his ascendancy over them. He watched them go down the ladder to the boat, while Mr. Punshon left his work with the booms to attend the departure. And then the captain went down again into the cabin. The door of the stateroom was open and Yolanda de Mara stood holding the curtain away from her face. She came out quickly.

"I heard!" she said smiling. "I heard him—and you. Did I not tell you what he was? Only a woman hunter."

"Well, what will you do, Señorita? You can't stay here when he comes on board with the soldiers."

"No. I will leave then. Tell me, where is the young man?"

"Asleep, I expect. He'll be on night duty now. He sleeps in the day. Why do you wish to see him?"

"To tell him what I will do. I stay here. He will understand that I was speaking the truth. He looked at me, just looked at me, Señor Capitan."

"Well, I can believe that," he replied, looking at her himself for a fleeting moment. She stood there close to him, in her "war paint," as he called it, her face dead white with powder, her strangely seductive eyes haunting him even as he avoided them. "It is not the custom, Señorita."

"Do not tell me that!" she exclaimed. "Do you think I would have done it . . . Oh!" She sank to the seat by the table and hid her face. "It is because I am in a trap otherwise, Señor Capitan." She looked up at him again. "You are my friend too? You would not have shouted at that big fool if you had not been my friend. I tell you he, Don Jaime, he loves me. In the hotel at Havana I saw his eyes. Only one woman he once loved, and she went away, loving another."

"This takes the cake," said the captain in English. "You mean to tell me . . . ! In Havana, eh? You know more about him than I do, Señorita. Would he do what you asked him?"

He spoke casually, picking up the sheaf of papers on the table. "Generous acknowledgment," he thought. Old Harkelaw had been right, then. And perhaps a new *Candleshoe,* a fast modern ship. His thoughts ran on smoothly.

"Who knows?" she asked bitterly. "He may be afraid, after all."

"Of you?"

"No, of marriage. Young men . . ." she said, at a loss to put her vague intuition into words.

"It's a trap, certainly," admitted the captain. "I have been married twenty years, Señorita. It's a trap. Once in, you're in for life. A man gets used to it, that's all. But this is what I meant when I said: will he do what you ask? I want him to stay on the ship. The other men, I think they will go. They wish to leave the ship. Now, if the young man stays, it will be good for him and for me. And for you. You understand it is his duty, but if you take him away from it, what can I do? The law is that if he desires he can go home when this ship changes her flag."

"You think he would go?"

"Ask yourself, Señorita. If he stays, he will have good money. If he goes home he will arrive in England with very little. He has only what he can earn, like me. He is not like your Costaraguan *caballeros* with fincas and plantacions."

"Money does not matter," she said.

"No?" said Captain Millerton, appraising her expensively

simple dress, the costly shoes, the emerald pendant on her breast, the rings on her hands, and the ruby-eyed serpent of gold coiled on her arm. "No? Money always matters, Señorita. Always!"

His voice rose on the last syllables with unpremeditated emotion. There was something shocking to him in such a statement as she had made. He lacked certain kinds of imagination, and the limits of his ethical world were set by law and tradition and the conception he had formed of an independence unharassed by dubious memories. But he had always before him the terror of the man out in the street with neither money nor job. And when he repeated the word *"Siempre!"* in a high voice, he meant it. He had been without money or job, and the iron of it was in his soul. The emotion in his voice made her look at him for an instant without thought of herself.

"Well, perhaps," she said slowly. "But to me it is not so. To me, Señor Capitan, there has been great wealth all around me and talk of more and more wealth as the railway grows, while in my heart was nothing but unhappiness. Those who should be my friends, the ladies of Don Orlando's family, have been my enemies. Sometimes I have thought of going back to the sisters of St. Candelaria. To escape from my life here! But I do not wish to die before I have lived. I saw myself returning here to that prison in the Calle Mirador, or what is much worse, the Santa Clara in the Camagua Valley. And so . . ." she turned to the captain with a shrug. "You think I was a bad woman to love this Don Jaime? How could I ask help from a man except by love? And for me it is not a trap but an escape from a trap, Señor Capitan. If I am married, not even Don Orlando can do anything. And there is some money too, which is mine if I marry."

Captain Millerton, who had beckoned her into his room as she spoke and closed the door, placed the papers on his writing table, thrust the letter files and cigar box into a drawer, and took a turn. The announcement that she had money did not surprise him. He knew well enough a fellow like Don Orlando was not likely to be after the girl's money, whatever it might be. But it was worth hearing from her own lips. Out of the depths of his mind floated the memory of how James Wishart came to be on the ship. Young owner sent him down. Young owner, who was handling people in London interested in affairs in Costaragua. Young George Harkelaw.

Captain Millerton was surprised he had not seen that clearly

before. The trouble with the captain was that he never believed anybody or trusted anybody. His attitude toward Orlando Perkins had been antagonistic because he was constitutionally unable to conceive a man as an able executive and a toff at the same time. And this animus he had extended to Yolanda, whom he had at once set down in his mind as one of the women such men as Perkins always had round. He himself was a respectable married man and had no desire to pry into such a woman's affairs.

But now he saw that he had overlooked something. Old John Harkelaw had said that the makings would cover all sweetening of the crew. Well, he would take care now to have one man he could trust. The young fellow could manage it. And he himself would be shut of those two men who were forever at him. Because they thought themselves indispensable.

He was aware of all this as he took a turn in his restless, nervous way. He faced the girl and saw her sitting in his wicker armchair. The more he thought of the plan the better he liked it, except that he had no idea how Don Orlando would take it. Almost before he was aware of it, he had voiced this thought. She looked up from the floor.

"Don Orlando?" she said. "I told Don Jaime in Havana, on the Malecon, that Don Orlando had noticed him and spoke well of him. He would never believe it. He does not think of me but of himself. He knows no one in Costaragua would wish to marry me without his permission, which he would not give. You understand, he does not think of me. I am an amusement. All women for him are an amusement. His passion is power. He does not think of love, but to make a new country out of Costaragua. He has grand ideas."

"You have no grand ideas about the country?"

"I?" she shrugged her shoulders and made a dreary grimace. "I do not ever want to go up there!" she pointed toward the great plateau. "Never again!"

He thought, "No need for me to have anything to do with it."

"I'm going on shore," he said. Looking through the port he saw, by the engine-room scuttle, the two men whom he knew were planning to give him what he called "the usual trouble." Mr. Barker and his second were in conversation. He made up his mind to go and see the agent at once.

"I'm going on shore," he told her. "Will you be all right? If anybody comes on board you can . . ."

He pointed to her room and made the movement of turning the key in the lock.

"How long?" she asked. "How long before you take the ship to Rio Taga?"

"Two or three days," he said, listening to the rumble of the winches hauling up the booms. He saw the second shouting in the chief's ear. They probably had more trouble. How much of it was real this time, he wondered. "You are safe here," he went on. "The steward . . ."

She got up, smoothed her dress, and put her hand to her hair, coiled round her head in a close texture of woven bronze.

"*Si.* Rafael is a Costaraguan. Last night I spoke to him. He understands, but he has no heart, no stomach, no liver. He should have been a monk in St. Basilio's in San Benito. Señor Capitan, will you give me something?"

She had come up to him as he pulled out a drawer in his writing table where he kept his leather satchel for the ship's papers. She pointed silently down among the bundles of old bills, cigar boxes full of odds and ends, where a revolver lay on a piece of flannel with a box of cartridges.

"I've never known it to fail," he said, watching her take the thing in her hand. He was thinking of his conversation with Mr. Punshon an hour ago.

"This?" she said, wrapping pistol and cartridges in the cloth.

"No," he said. "I don't suppose it will fail. What I meant was . . ."

He began to fill his satchel with quick jerky movements.

"You get your own way, I notice," he remarked, as she opened the door.

CHAPTER VI

HE WAS able to get into his boat, which Mr. Punshon had ready under the stern to pull at once to the gangway, without being seen by either the chief or the second. He wanted to have the matter threshed out completely before allowing them to corner him with an ultimatum. Captain Millerton knew the value of surprise in dealing with men.

He hurried up the Calle del Mar, glad to reach the shadow of the wooden arcades that lined the street of the compradors and foreign agents. That street was unusually active and populous. In the little triangular space between the Custom House and the railway shops, across which a shrieking engine was already pushing a row of bumping flat cars toward the jetty, groups of soldiers rested under the trees and conversed with the old women and young girls who sold them dulces and watermelon from trays carried on their heads. Fresh from the high lands or the foothills around San Paulo, these men felt the coastal heat. Captain Millerton, on the other hand, had always liked hot weather. He merely wiped his brow and pushed on to where a brass plate bore the words "Leake & Co." and he could see the extremely comforting arrangement of British and American flags hanging from the roof. Just beyond, soldiers lounged in front of another brass plate on the door of Gonzales & Co.

Captain Millerton stepped into the office of Leake & Co. Far down behind the stacks of machinery and packing cases he saw a man in a suit of blue and white seersucker cloth, his hands in his pockets, his head thrown back and his mouth open as he declaimed to Mr. Leake at his desk in his private office. This man, as Captain Millerton entered, gave him a full candid stare and made a gesture of salutation, as though acknowledging the captain's right to the company of his peers. Mr. Leake, looking up, gave a faint sign of recognition. Suddenly he rose and shook hands briefly in that diffident yet forceful way some Englishmen use to express their real disbelief in social equality. He hastily removed a pair of glasses, which he found necessary at times for

reading small print and Spanish script. He then introduced the captain.

"Mr. Claxon is looking for some men," he said in a low tone. "He is going into the interior."

Captain Millerton did not look at the man who was going into the interior. Mr. Claxon had given him a long, an unnecessarily long handshake, and had intoned a remarkably verbose expression of the gratification he felt on meeting the captain. Captain Millerton knew at once the man was a Yankee, by which he meant a native of America del Norte. Captain Millerton detested Yankees in a way that could only be conceived by some brother captain who had been bully-ragged, hoodwinked, cheated and driven half mad with legal complications whenever he had had the bad luck to enter an American port. The class of Americans a shipmaster met, in Captain Millerton's past experience, did not endear God's country to him. He lumped them all together as crooks, shysters, and sharp business men, who chartered British ships under false pretences and at ruinously cheap rates and held the master responsible for every pen'orth of pilfering and every infraction of foolish regulations he'd never heard of. Captain Millerton had also met another type in the Canal Zone, raucous hell hounds from western mining camps who lounged round sleek long-moustached protégés in large hats —gentlemen gamblers who ran welcome clubs in Colon and sheared the newly arrived sheep. Captain Millerton hated the sight of them now. He hated, quite unconsciously, the haggard nakedness of their souls, their racial braggadocio when dealing with the Colombians of the Isthmus and the yellow-faced French of the Canal.

All this flashed through his mind as Mr. Claxon shook hands with methodical fervour, apparently unaware of the captain's desire to ignore him. The latter became aware of a drone of words. He heard phrases like "getting together in a time like this," and "blood is thicker than water." Was it? Captain Millerton took no stock in generalizations. He could only formulate a principle out of long experience, and even then he had his doubts. And when he expressed it there was no feeling for the dramatic. He disliked phrases like that.

He turned to Mr. Leake at last.

"Looking for men?" he said. "You know how I am situated? I may need men."

Mr. Leake accepted from the captain the deed of transfer

which had been prepared by Barinas & Co. in Havana. He had a letter under his hand which had come in on the train from San Paulo advising him that the Costaraguan ship's papers were being sent from the capital at once. He put on his glasses again.

"I may need a lot of men," said Millerton looking round and hanging his straw hat on the knob of the letter press. He sat down and saw the American slowly swaying to and fro, as though he were balancing himself on a moving deck.

"If you'll excuse me saying so, Captain," came the leisurely drone again, "that's just what we've been figuring on in this little business of mine. If it comes off. I'm frank to tell you it doesn't look very bright at present."

"Well, of course, you understand the ship has first call on any men in the railway employ," said the captain. "It's the Company's job to find me a crew if they insist on changing the flag."

"I am attending to that," said Mr. Leake.

"And cargadors," added the captain. "When do I come alongside?"

"At once." Mr. Leake took up the manifest and stowage plan which the captain held out to him. "What men do you wish to replace?"

"I need two engineers, I expect. The chief and second got wind of this transfer, and they're under the impression I have to carry them and intend to ask wages beyond all reason. Nothing but trouble ever since they came on the ship."

"What are you going to do, then?" said Mr. Leake, sharpening a pencil with a pearl-handled penknife.

"Well, it will be a coasting trade, and my third's got a second's certificate. He was sent here with something like that in view, if you ask me. Friend of young George Harkelaw in the office."

"Is that the George Harkelaw who wrote a play? I saw a notice of it in the *Times*," said Mr. Leake.

"It would be quite like him," remarked the captain. "He's one of those clever young fellows, always saying one thing and meaning two or three things. Can't say I care much for that kind. The old man's good enough for me. He doesn't try to take a rise out of you when he speaks to you."

"What about the others?"

"The mate will stay. Old fellow. Been master in sail. The other . . . Probably stay. No experience."

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Claxon, "I'll step out while you're doing your business. See you later, Captain."

"Who's that?" said Captain Millerton.

Mr. Leake mentioned Mr. Claxon's credentials.

"What's he want men for?"

"He's going into Las Esmeraldas to start a small plant on the Hispaniola Concession. He is floating a company in San Paulo to manage it as soon as the Hispaniola answer his cable."

"Rather a speculation, I should think."

"Not so much as it might be," said Mr. Leake. "He has his head screwed on the right way. He has got hold of the thing by the right end. I should let him have the men, Captain."

"I don't care what those chaps do once you've given me a couple of good mechanics out of the shops. The *Candleshoe's* all right."

"Oh, yes."

"I want it tied up before I go back and talk to them," the captain insisted. "They think they've got me boxed. They think the ship can't sail without them."

Mr. Leake was going methodically through the deed of transfer. He did not answer for a moment. Then he said:

"Are they competent?"

"Very much so," said the captain. "I've no complaint on that score. Been in the company some time. That's not the trouble. They're wanderers. They've been through the Boer War together, been on transports together. They've both been artificers in the Naval Reserve, though they don't know I know it. Go about together. Back one another up. And always against the bridge, you understand. Grub troubles all the time. I keep the average table, but you'd never please those two. And they think they've got me boxed now."

"Then we'd better go over and see the manager of the shop," said Mr. Leake.

When they returned Captain Millerton wore an expression of agreeable composure. He had interviewed two powerful young men from the northeast coast of England, who had been a few voyages in the engine room and who were willing to sign Costaraguan articles. They also spoke Spanish, and in the event of getting local firemen that was something to be thankful for. Things were breaking the captain's way.

He sat down in Mr. Leake's office and told him of his expe-

riences of the morning. He told of the *Sirena* coming out and trying to board him.

"You did absolutely right," said Mr. Leake. "Though there was a lot of luck in it. Bustillo has no authority for his raid. Things would be serious enough for us here if General Gonzalez only had transport. But we know he has none, practically. And in guns, except some light mountain guns on mules, which are useless in this department. The raid and the scheme to collar your ship were inspired by that young Carlos Almanzor."

Captain Millerton nodded.

"I understand all about that. The girl told me. Fine kettle of fish she's cooked. Sending notes from Havana to that young don blowing the gaff; or thought she was. Don Orlando was supposed to be on board, you see? Plan was to capture him and hold him for ransom. Don Orlando got wind of it, I suppose, and stopped in Havana."

"He gets wind of most things in Costaragua," said Mr. Leake. "He is the most aggressive personality in the country."

"The girl is going to diddle him," said the captain. "Diddle them all." And he told Mr. Leake of Colonel Gonzalez' visit to the *Candleshoe*.

"He is very well known," murmured Mr. Leake. "Brother of the Minister of War, you see. How is she going to—er—diddle him, as you put it? She isn't going to run away, is she?"

"She's staying on the ship for the present. Some sort of attraction on board, I fancy. And there's no objection as far as I am concerned. In fact, it's an advantage. But when we go down the coast she'll have to come ashore."

"But that is no solution when Don Orlando is due very soon on the *Santa Brigida*. He is not a man who can be trifled with."

"That girl doesn't stand any hanky-pank either," remarked the captain. "She's clever in her way, though from what she tells me it is a difficult situation. All the men she knows think she's . . . well, you know what I mean," ended the captain lamely.

"Oh, quite," said Mr. Leake, going on with his work. "It is a situation that is all the more difficult because of the revolution. And if Colonel Martinez discovered in any way that she had encouraged Carlos Almanzor it would be much worse—for her."

"Well, he's gone away," said the captain.

"So far as we know he has. The *guardacosta* was lying off about seven miles this morning after you came in. As I told

you, the whole thing is a private enterprise, only loosely connected with the main rising. I have seen a proclamation which they were going to post on the Intendencia this morning which showed they were acting on their own initiative very largely. That young Almanzor is more or less of a hot potato for the Agrarians. And Bustillo is not loved passionately by his relative the president, I assure you. It is a most unpleasant business for Don Hernando. And if General Gonzales learns just what Bustillo has been up to, giving the alarm here and acting without orders, he will have a fit. I fancy Bustillo is up to something else. There is nothing to prevent him landing when he likes between here and Rio Taga."

"What for?" demanded the captain. "There's precious little to land for, I should say."

Mr. Leake, bent over the long sheets of the manifest, shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Nobody knows that," he said, taking off the glasses and wiping them. "I merely suspect it from a fairly long acquaintance with the country. The machinery from Hamburg is in the after hold, I see."

"Yes, in the 'tween deck. Laundry machinery."

"That's what it is called," said Mr. Leake. "I expect Colonel von Stücke in very shortly to accept delivery."

"Well," said Captain Millerton in a resigned tone, "fashions change. It was pianos when I was in the Venezuelan Navy. The whole country was mad about music in those days. And I've heard of gramaphones too."

"This really is laundry machinery, Captain," said the consular agent. "You can see them open the cases."

"It makes no difference to me," said the captain. "It's to your order, Mr. Leake. And the government are passing it in. The sooner it's out of the ship the better. None of us are in this for our health. I suppose Colonel Whats-his-name is one of Don Orlando's men?"

"He is director of the Military School in San Benito. He and a Costaraguan gentleman are going into partnership in a laundry. With the drift of the girls into the coffee towns and the high wages in San Paulo, you see the families can't find laundresses now as they used to. And so . . ."

Captain Millerton muttered that he might be one of Don Orlando's men, after all.

"Oh, no doubt. In fact, he organized the guards in the con-

struction camps up beyond San Paulo. The Company have considerable confidence in him. He prepared a report, you know, on the army, some time ago, which was pigeonholed. The fact is, we have to proceed slowly in this country. Influence still counts for a lot in the higher positions in all departments."

"And always will down here," said the captain, getting up and glancing sourly at the map of Costaragua on the wall, as though he could see the influence saturating the entire country. "I'm going back to the ship," he said. "Must be on board when she comes alongside."

"We shall pay overtime for discharging," said Mr. Leake. "And we may leave some of the stuff on board until you return from Rio Taga. The draft at the entrance is eighteen feet."

"The harbour master says it's bad holding ground," said the captain. "Wind's offshore most of the time. And the rains are coming."

"That is one of the reasons for discharging as soon as possible. Can you work at night, Captain? Give the men something extra."

"Leave that to me." He paused at the door. "I'm doing all this very much in the dark, you must remember," he said, looking into the outer office for a moment. Three young men, very brown of skin and seated on high stools, turned and looked at the opening door. Captain Millerton closed it on them and went back to Mr. Leake's desk. "I'm promised something for this job," he said, "something worth while. But nobody's got round to saying right out what it will be. If I have to sweeten the men and pay overtime and extra money under the new articles, I'll have to know where I am. Old Harkelaw said it would be substantial."

"It will be. Don Francisco Striker will be in a position to make it very substantial when this present situation is over."

"Old Harkelaw promised me a new ship they're ordering."

"You are in a very fortunate position, Captain," said Mr. Leake.

"I've had bad luck as well," said the captain hastily. "And a man has to retire some time. They say a man's too old at forty, nowadays. New blood, young men our policy, they tell you. They don't seem to worry much about the old ones. We have to look after ourselves."

"Well, this is a good opportunity."

"I'll be back later."

He went at last, aware of the eyes following him through the warehouse. He collided with Mr. Reid B. Claxon as he came out into the Calle del Mar. Mr. Claxon had a pale gray cablegram in his hand.

"It's O. K.," he said. "Those men of yours, Captain—I'll take 'em up to San Paulo if they'll go. We're going right up."

"You'd better not. You don't know what you're in for." Captain Millerton edged past the big dominating person in the crumpled seersucker suit.

"It's a good thing for them, Captain."

"Is it?" He was moving down the arcade. "I'll be sure to tell them that."

He wondered to himself what that fellow would make of Mr. Barker and the second. He was under no illusion about his chief engineer. The man might be just what the American wanted. But Captain Millerton was not going to be mixed up in it. He had seen too many difficulties arise when a shipmaster went out of his way to meddle. He thought to himself, he would be glad when the girl went ashore, for that matter. Glad when Don Orlando came, too.

As the boat approached the ship he heard eight bells rung on the bridge. He saw Rafael Alvarez emerge from the scuttle and ring the bell for dinner. There would be trouble about the grub, of course, because there was no meat save a few goats and sinewy sheep. Always the way in a country full of beef, he reflected, thinking of Caracas and even Buenos Aires. And nowadays a crew kicked all the time over salt meat. It was good stuff too, he reflected. He himself had never lost his taste for good salt beef with a few pickles and a potato in its jacket. Men were going soft. Socialism was eating into the working classes everywhere, and foreigners would get the trade.

He ran up the ladder and turned aft. Mr. Punshon was hurrying to meet him. He saw the steward backed against the galley door, surrounded by half a dozen firemen and the second engineer. He heard voices lifted in savage dissonance: "You pimp!" . . . "You dago thief!" . . . "What do you call this stuff, eh?" . . . ". . . spiggotty son of a——" and then, "Stand away, boys! Here's the old man!"

Captain Millerton found himself suddenly confronted with the second. Mr. Humphries was wearing a brown boiler suit of inconceivable foulness; his face was marked like a red Indian war chief with smears of red rust and black grease. In his

hand he held a dish of stew. And as he opened his mouth the chief engineer came out of the engine-room door wiping his hands on a sweat rag.

"Skipper!" said the second, and held up the dish. "You can't get away with this any more. If you want men to work—look at it. Is that a dinner for three men?"

"I'm not going to argue with you," said the captain, passing along. "It's what we have in the cabin. You can take it or leave it. You've been grumbling all the trip."

The two engineers looked at each other.

"Well, we aren't going to grumble any more, Skipper," said Mr. Barker. "We've had enough of you and your pretty little ways. We'll just ask you for our wages up to to-day, and you can sign us off."

"Sign who off?" asked Millerton.

"The two of us and about half the crowd in the stokehold," said Mr. Barker.

"The Britishers," added the second as an afterthought, and he stared insolently at the captain of the *Candleshoe,* who turned to the mate.

"Mr. Punshon, you heard that?"

The mate uttered a vague, deep sound in his throat. His face was redder than usual, and he held his fat hands behind his rotund back.

"Then put it down in the ship's log. All right," said the captain to the chief. "I'll pay you off this afternoon in the agent's office. Get the main engines ready to go alongside after dinner. You can consider yourselves finished when she's tied up to the satisfaction of the master."

He went along to the poop and descended to his room. He drew the curtain carefully from the window looking forward and watched the group he had just left. The two engineers were standing by the rail conversing with grave faces. Captain Millerton's bearded and embittered features relaxed slowly into a smile.

"That's for you, Mister Bally Barker!" he said in a low voice. "God!" he muttered, "he never expected to be taken up like that! Out! You can see both of 'em biting on it. Out, by God! And by their own act!"

He contemplated them for a few moments.

"They never asked for passage money," he said to himself, calculating quickly, and he added inaudibly, "and they can find that Yankee for themselves."

CHAPTER VII

JAMES, relieved for the day, lay on the settee in his overheated room, his hands folded on his breast and his eyes closed; but for a long while he did not sleep. Outside the sounds of the ship waking up, sailors dragging gear along the deck, steam hammering in the pipes, firemen hauling up coal and dumping it with heavy rumbles into the galley bunker—all these familiar and multifarious noises blended with the turmoil of his heart.

For James was afraid of the future. As he lay there, like a corpse laid out for burial, his thoughts reverted again and again to the conversation he had had with Yolanda at the break of the poop as the ship drove through the waters of the Caribbean toward Puerto Balboa. Her seductive voice had come down to him from beneath the awning in the pulsating darkness. Once, in obedience to her whisper, he had swung up on the rail, and she had taken his head in her hands, grasping the thick close-curled hair in the fierceness of her inarticulate passion.

"*Querido!*" she had breathed close to his ear. "I love you, I love you! Can you understand how I love you? You will take me away to your country and we will love. Ah!"

And for that moment he had responded. They had clung together in that pulsating darkness. He had almost lost his head. It now seemed to him as though for a while he had even lost consciousness while their lips were pressed together and he was enfolded in the fragrant glamour of her person.

"Life for me has been so bad, *querido,*" she had murmured, touching his cheek with her palm. "I have had everything except love. When I saw you in the hotel and you looked at me, it was as though you had never seen a woman before."

Clinging to the rail he had whispered into her hair, "It was true, in a way. I had never seen a girl like you before. Yolanda, you are very beautiful."

"And you love me, *querido?* How happy we shall be in your country where I can forget Costaragua and all my troubles!

You do not answer: you have no words of love for me yet. You are a shy boy. That is why I laugh a little sometimes. I think 'how he looks at me and does not speak! He thinks I am not like the English ladies.' Well, *amigo mio,* that is true. I see them sometimes in New York. In the school we had two English ladies. Very stiff! Yet they liked me because they said I was what we call *simpatica* to them. They used to ask me if my family had a great house in Costaragua and whether I had many brothers and sisters. The families in my country are very large, *querido.* The Altamiras had four daughters in that school and the Gonzalez six. And when I told them I was alone, with no family at all, they would kiss me and give me candies and let me go into their rooms to sit and talk to them. That was good for me. I do not like men, *querido.* The other girls talked all the time of the young men at the opera and at the dancing school. Ah, yes, the young ladies and the young gentlemen! I did not like them. They ask me for dances, and they have heard from the Gonzalez girls, whose father was then secretary to the president, that I am of poor family without father or mother. Some of the Olivares, my mother's family, *amigo mio,* are chicleros. The girls told the English teachers my father was a peon. That was to pay me out because the teachers loved me. And I loved them! They were so simple and so plain in the face. Are all your English ladies plain, *querido?* Do they look like nuns who have run away and bought funny dresses? But, of course, I have never been in your country. When we go, you will show me your family. Have you any sisters, *querido?"*

She had run on like that, a musical babble, touching his hair with her hand and sometimes kissing his temple where the hair curled closely. He remembered now that, as the first watch had crept on, he had become more and more oblivious of reality. The music of her voice and the magic of her personality captured him. He remembered, too, that Four Bells had roused him. They had gone away aft behind the steering wheel, and they heard the footsteps of the sailor going to look at the patent log on the port rail. He had had her in his arms, and he had been staring into the distance where the rising moon had made a golden dazzle on the sea. Had her in his arms! She had been standing on the grating of the steering gear, her face close to his, her extraordinary eyes glowing, as she told him that, rather than go up to San Benito again, she would spring into the sea

and drown. That she was leaving the whole of her life behind, "as though I were dying and going to the next world," she breathed.

And then, for a moment, they remained motionless as the man hurried to the rail on the other side of the cabin scuttle, and they heard the faint clear ring of another mile on the log, and saw the faint flare of the match illuminate the man's contorted face as he looked close at the dial.

As James lay in perfect immobility on his settee he was aware that he had been carried away. He had agreed. He had let her believe he was able to play the part her romantic imagination had assigned to him. But it was not the difficulty in which she had plunged him that confronted him as he lay thinking. It was the fact that he could not discover the course he ought to steer. Even now that he was alone in his cabin the power of Yolanda's appeal was strong upon him. He was aware of a desire to drift, to let that appeal carry him wherever it would, to trust to chance to bring him to port. And the whole of his inherited character was resisting that appeal. It was in conflict with all that he called, privately, principle. It was reminding him of his experience, which made him distrustful of his own fortune. He had been confiding and had been made a fool of. It hung like a faint cloud at the back of his mind, that folly—a cloud illumined by the sudden passion of this girl who was clinging to him to draw her out of a jungle of politics, business, and lust, who was like a warlike queen in exile struggling against sinister forces.

Within the motionless placidity of his body James Wishart's mind was in turmoil. All that he and his ancestors called "the flesh," all that he knew as romance and bright adventure, was ranged against the stubborn principle of his character. It was a situation that he had never anticipated. To make a choice of a course was a man's destiny; in spite of what might be argued, there was free will. But was there? He saw himself divided, as though there were two persons in him. And it was not a question of good and evil, either. He did not think it evil to hold that girl in his arms. It was the other way about. What sort of man would he be to back out. And yet some inarticulate instinct warned him that he did not know everything. It gave him a sudden view of Yolanda standing outside the shop in Sauchiehall Street, ready to enter, while his mother and father,

gray and prim, stood looking at her as they might look at some bright tropical insect alighting on the boxes of old books.

A shadow crossed his face as he saw this picture in his mind. It evoked another picture too, and one he could not find the fortitude to examine. His problem was that his honour was involved on what might be the side of fortune and folly. And when he would see her again, after those moments of sensuous ecstasy, when she pressed her body to his, murmuring in a stifled whisper, "Oh, my love, my love!" what could he do for very shame?

He had kept his watch that morning in a trance, carrying out his duties mechanically and with extra vigour. He had made up his mind that nothing should interfere with that, anyhow. It was his hold on reality, and it made that tryst on the poop seem more than ever an unbelievable dream. When the second mate, a young man he could not like, came down and began to talk of Yolanda as though, James thought, he had picked her up in the streets, there came a steadying rush of sanity to aid him. Stand by the ship? That was of course. It gave him a purchase to keep him from sliding downhill to disaster. He understood all at once what was meant when they spoke of women dragging men to destruction. He had thought vaguely that it was always the man's fault for lacking strength. Now he saw how strength could be of no avail since it was engaged against the man himself. So he had said loudly that he had no intention of leaving the ship. No! As he lay now with eyes closed, resting from the hot, sweating toil of coming into port, he saw that the act of staying by the ship, as George Harkelaw had hinted, had assumed an importance he had not imagined previously. He threw into his voice a conviction that carried over to the second mate. James felt that it was a way out. He must stay by the ship. Neither Yolanda nor his conscience could get at him for that.

And on that he slept.

CHAPTER VIII

"HE'S got to send us home," said Mr. Humphries.

Mr. Barker moved a little in his chair outside the Cantina Sol and took a fresh draw on the cigar José Barrillo had brought him with the drinks. They were waiting to be paid off.

"How do you know he has to send us home?" he inquired. "Don't forget, Jack, we told him we were finished. Asked for it. And that fat-faced mate of his dived into the chart room and wrote it down in the log. So we're dished unless the consul gets it for you. And what do you want to go home for? I thought you were all for a flutter out here."

Mr. Humphries was silent for a moment. He was warm. He was wearing a crumpled blue-serge suit with a long vent halfway up the back of the narrow waist, patent leather shoes with pointed toes, and bowler hat with a flat brim and damaged by water. His chin was blue for the lack of a shave, and his eyes were black and opaque with fatigue. He looked like a gambler who had slept in a drain pipe, except that his hands, heavy and calloused, with black finger nails, protruded strangely from ragged cuffs.

"You're scared yourself, Chief."

"Am I? What's the matter with you since we came ashore?"

Mr. Humphries took a wet fragment of cigarette from his lips, spat out some threads of tobacco, and stared down the arcade. He did not reply. He was preoccupied with his thoughts. He was trying to become adjusted to the fact that he and Mr. Barker, so far from holding up the old man and making him give them the high wages sometimes paid on this coast, had put themselves on the beach with about thirty pounds between them. They had worked the engines while the *Candleshoe* moved alongside the jetty and then the old man had told them they could consider themselves finished. That was the phrase he used. So that third, that quiet young squirt who had joined at the last minute, whom they had made do all the work they could, initiating him into every quirk and peculiarity, every

weakness and every makeshift, depending upon him as men depend only upon invincible integrity, was now chief. Two muscular Tynesiders, engine fitters in the railway shops, were already on board as substitutes. Six Costaraguan plate layers, who had been firemen in ships in their time, had taken the places of the men who had come ashore with Mr. Humphries and the chief. They were to be sent home, the old man told them. Passage to Colon on the *Santa Brigida* and third-class Royal Mail or Hamburg-South American Line.

But the two of them were out. It was brought home to them that the Central Railway of Costaragua was very much of a going concern. As they stood in the yard for a while, considering the plan of applying for work there, rather tamely after what they had told the old man, the place had struck them as unpleasantly like the old country. Men went rapidly about their business. Hollow clangs reverberated from the plate shop. Two trains, which had brought the troops in from San Paulo that morning, stood on sidings.

They had turned away. Mr. Barker had looked at him, and seeing the thought in his mind, had not spoken. Not yet. They were not done yet. Thirty pounds between them. Mr. Humphries wished now he had saved some of that money he had won in the lottery in Havana. The thought of Havana brought him back, with a sudden deadening impact, to Puerto Balboa, because he knew from Faustine that Gina might be here. Gina was here. He was only fooling himself. Faustine had had money from her for the kid.

Now he did not answer Mr. Barker with his usual truculence, because his thoughts, having dealt with the predicament in which they had plunged themselves, began to roam. He saw himself in a new and unfavourable light. With Faustine and with everybody in Havana he had been truculent and domineering. He had taken a high hand with Faustine because he had been flush. That had been the real reason. Had he been flush now, he would not have dreaded being suddenly confronted by Gina. He had believed that no matter how much contempt and hatred she might have for him, if he could take her by storm, throwing five-pound notes in her lap and buying her an emerald necklace in San Paulo, he would be able to preserve his pride.

He leaned forward, frowning at the fresh cigarette he was lighting. For the time what might happen to them lost its significance. It was what had actually happened to himself, inside,

which he could not escape. He had a sudden panic-stricken suspicion that the morning just passed had been one of those crises which make or break men. At school he had learned about the tide in the affairs of men. "Taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." How did it go? "Omitted. . . . Omitted, all the voyage. . . ." He had forgotten it. No, "All the fortune of their life was bound in shallows."

His face sharpened as he expelled smoke through his nostrils and watched a squad of soldiers marching across the square. Out! There wasn't much appearance of being led on to fortune now. On the beach in the middle of a revolution. Again the notion came to him that they could do better if they waited. Or was that only the lethargy of fear?

He stole a look at the chief. Now that he was facing it, to go up country on a chance of getting a job or even getting shot, was less pleasant than he had believed. And yet he would do anything to avoid that girl's eyes. He remembered her face, and he could imagine with terrible clarity how she would look at him, a bummer on a Central American beach, hunting a job after being kicked out of his ship. He would not go down that street on any account. He could see the corner by the church from where he was sitting. He took a sudden gulp of whisky and knocked the ash unnecessarily from his cigarette. He wished now he had spoken to the chief. They would have to stick together. Mr. Barker had his own thoughts. But he hadn't Gina to think of. The chief never let a woman get hold of him. It was the best way. . . .

". . . bound in shallows and in miseries." He learned that in school. "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears." All that sort of thing. What would Gina do if he . . . ? He hadn't the guts! It was a curious thing to fear a woman and respect her, to know she was better, far better, than yourself and yet lack the guts to act on it. He threw the cigarette down, and an urchin lying among the arches pounced upon it.

He saw the chief draw out his heavy gold watch and chafe the glass with his thumb.

He couldn't act on it. The time to do that had been in Havana, long ago. It was too late now. He thought he saw Gina as another Faustine, hard-faced, sagging under eyes and chin, a friend of the jefe of police, a harpy of the night. That was what happened. Making money for the kid. He himself had probably faded out of the picture altogether.

He had thought himself lucky that time when the ship carried him away and he didn't return to Havana for so long. And now, for all he knew, that had been the tide in his affairs. He saw Gina again as he had seen her at first, and he drew in his breath sharply. . . .

In and out of the cantina passed groups of officers in white drill, with cross belts and high-fronted German hats. They swaggered and stroked their moustaches. Some sat outside, their buttocks bulging below their tunics, their spurs jingling. José Barillo moved in and out with his tray while a Chinaman collected the glasses and washed them behind the bar. Presently José came and stood at Mr. Barker's elbow.

"Come to-night, Señores," he said. "I shall have señoritas to-night, to serve the drinks and dance with the customers."

"Look at all the militia," said the chief in a low tone. "Where would we civilians come in?"

"Your money just as good as anybody's," said José. "When I say señoritas, I mean young ladies, very respectable."

Mr. Barker sucked a tooth and accepted the change.

"Boss," he said, "it isn't señoritas we're looking for."

As they went across the Plaza to reach the Calle del Mar the second looked critically at Mr. Barker. It occurred to him that in thinking of Gina he had forgotten their actual position in the world. In a few moments they would receive their wages and be free "to make our fortunes," he thought. He had often heard of men who got on the beach and struck rich veins of prosperity. He was moved to silence as he contemplated the problem at close range. The *Candleshoe*—he could see her funnel now, a thin stream of transparent smoke issuing from it—the *Candleshoe,* where he had worked with bitterness and exasperation, cursing all on board, seemed not a bad old ship now. He was a seaman. To him, in spite of the stormy vagrancy of his life, in spite of that adventure of South Africa when he and Mr. Barker had gone soldiering, a ship was more than home. It was security and, if he only had known it, the highest happiness of which he was capable. As they drew near Leake & Co.'s office they were silent.

Mr. Barker, in fact, was also looking down the street at the *Candleshoe's* funnel. For him, with his tough implacable mind, inflamed with anger against Captain Millerton and the owners because they did not even know what he did for them keeping that old ship moving, there was an almost painful nostalgia when

he contemplated her familiar contours. He too wished he was back, and his long acquaintance with Jack Humphries made it easy for him to know what the other man was thinking. And so he remained silent. He did not know what they would have to do if Captain Millerton failed to offer them a passage home. Going into the interior with a rebel army a few miles away was not easy. All work would be stopped. Mr. Barker had had the notion of reaching San Paulo and seeing whether he could get work on the river steamers. A mechanic can always find a living.

"He was clever in his dirt, wasn't he?" said Mr. Humphries, pulling down his vest.

Mr. Barker's suit needed laundering, and in any case it did not harmonize with the brown fedora on his head or the heavy brown boots he was wearing. He took off the hat and passed his handkerchief over the back of his neck and under his chin. He was not disposed to deny that Captain Millerton had been clever, but he refrained from comment. He raised his eyes to look at a big dominating man in a seersucker suit, with two fountain pens and three cigars in his breast pocket, a man who held his head back and seemed about to address a public meeting. He was standing at the entrance of the consular agent's office. Mr. Barker, absorbed in the enigmatic future as well as the disagreeable interview now impending, was pushing past when he heard a friendly voice.

"You boys off the *Candleshoe?* I thought so. When you're through, I have a little proposition to put before you. Suppose we have a little drink. You'll find me in the Cantina Sol. Know it? Yes, the captain's in there with the consul and the other fellows. Don't forget, now. Cantina Sol, in the Plaza. I've a transaction may interest you boys. Up country. I can make you a very—" he handed each of them a cigar and put one in his own mouth—"advantageous offer. Here's my card. See you in half an hour, say."

CHAPTER IX

MR. HARRIS, keeping the deck while the mate took forty winks before supper, waited with a subdued demeanour to see what James would do. He had been accumulating information all day. He had been at the cabin table, unfortunately, when the old man came on board and "sacked the chief and the second on the spot," as the carpenter had later informed him. Mr. Harris was one of those young men who are born newsgatherers. He saw Rafael Alvarez take a tray into Yolanda's cabin. He had followed her up on the poop when she appeared later, hovering on the rail near her chair, naïvely perplexed when she gave him a blank gaze followed by an amused smile. He had recovered his command of himself, however. The indisputable fact of the ship changing to new articles under the bill of sale had acted like a bracing cold shower upon the second mate's simple organism, which was incapable of dropping the substance for the shadow. He had decided, without knowing a great deal about it, through a sort of protective instinct, that following those two fools over the side would be precious poor business for himself. His exploits with Mr. Punshon with those chaps from the *guardacosta* had involved him in a curiously complex loyalty to the *Candleshoe*. He had become aware of Mr. Punshon as a human being, puffing and blowing, blue eyes agleam, plump, powerful fists hauling on a wet rope. And for one incredible moment he had seen Mr. Punshon trying to clasp a young Apollo streaming with water as he sprang on the rail again and plunged back into the sea. The two mates, so far apart in age and experience that they might have been father and son, became in that moment of excitement identified with the *Candleshoe*. And the first fruits of that newly established fraternity had been Mr. Punshon's remark, when the old man went ashore, that "he was away to pay off those two." And what did Mr. Harris think of the young fellow going chief on the coast? It showed you couldn't keep a good man down.

Mr. Harris wasn't so sure of that. He saw no meteoric rise

for himself, and he said so. Mr. Punshon's globular features, beginning to peel in the sun, made his blue eyes and the coarse bristles of his moustache appear artificial, as he fixed the former on the green cay across the harbour. Mr. Punshon didn't quite see, he said, what Mr. Harris had to complain about.

"At your age," he rumbled with a certain gentle emphasis. "I was still in the forecastle of a West Indiaman, getting one pound ten a month."

Mr. Harris didn't think the old fellow had much to make a fuss about now, but he merely remarked that times changed. There used to be slaves, he added as an afterthought.

Mr. Punshon, allowed to simmer a little longer under the bridge awning, had made allusion to "our passenger." She was staying on board for the present, he said. Mr. Harris, once the great question of standing by the ship was out of the way, was able to indulge an enormous curiosity about Yolanda.

"She tried to get me on," he said with vivacity, thinking of the evening he intended to spend ashore, "but I wasn't having any, Mister."

Mr. Punshon again contemplated the skyline of the cay. The ship trembled to the violent roar of the winches as the Costaraguan cargadors opened the valves wide. They could hear the wire rope grinding and slipping on the coamings, the whistle of the men in the hold, the heavy bumps as the cargo was dragged into the hatch and swung to and fro.

"Not having any, humph?" he mumbled. He was not really thinking about Mr. Harris and his remarkable adventures at all. To Mr. Punshon the second mate was merely a fly buzzing on his windowpane. He was a young squirt who would follow a leader all his life, no doubt. He was, the mate knew, an entirely unsuitable companion for Mr. Punshon's daughters, for example. Mr. Punshon noticed many things the second mate gave him no credit for. He was thinking now of the young man who was to take charge. He was thinking of his own youth, which had once been aflame with a great passion. He had seen romance in a tropic city. He had been master, at twenty-six, of a fruit boat out of the Islands for London River. A fine billet, and he had been a fine, dashing young skipper. Even now, with those three strapping daughters at home and a patient, loving wife, he thought of those days with Manuela, halfway up the mountain above Funchal, looking out across a sea like a misty jewel. He remembered the voyage he arrived as the mail boat sailed,

and he had waved to the people on the rail, little thinking who was there. When he had climbed up to the cottage Manuela was gone. Gone down to Rio on the mail boat. He had sat down by the window and cried. The memory of that paroxysm of grief did not make Mr. Punshon ashamed. He was rather ashamed of Mr. Harris, who was telling him that women were all alike; they tried to get you on. Mr. Harris would never lay his head on a remembered pillow and cry as though his heart would break.

Mr. Harris, however, was alive to everything going on. He heard from the cargadors that the colonel in command of the Liberal army was after a señorita on the ship. He heard from a Chinese youth in black pongee and a straw hat, who came on board with the card of the New Bristol House, that a lot of people, including many girls from the cabins behind the church, had run away toward Lake Cristobal, where the rebel army was encamped. He had a word with one of the new engineers, who was from Newcastle, and learned that the native workmen in the railway yards had formed a union and thought it a good time to strike when the unfamiliar-looking soldiers from the plateau came into the town. An Englishman, a schoolmaster, had been arrested as their organizer and was now in the calabozo. One of the engine drivers had done it out of revenge. His wife had been taking music lessons from the Englishman. A native plate layer had carried the tale of her goings on to him. The Englishman's wife, a Costaraguan woman, had gone with her family up to the Lake. There was talk of shooting him, but probably they would put him on the *Santa Brigida* and chase him out of the country. There he was in the calabozo, and the British consul said he'd better stay there for the present.

Mr. Harris, as he kept the deck during the long, hot afternoon while the mate was lying down and the old man was ashore, recalled James Wishart's words that morning. It was more than ever clear to him which side his own bread was buttered. The third knew something when they left Glasgow. Here he was, going chief his first voyage in the Company. Mr. Harris had rather doubted that rumour about the young owner being interested in a third engineer. But it looked that way now. Mr. Harris watched for him. In a friendly chat with the mess boy he learned that James had slept right through dinner, and that the steward had been down twice to know if he was waking.

The passenger had sent him, Larry breathed in the second mate's ear.

"Who? That piece?"

Mr. Harris walked quickly along the bridge deck, his hands in his jacket pockets, his chin pressed hard down on his soiled collar, his eyes on the ground. He suddenly felt small. The impression James had made upon him day by day through the voyage, culminating in this final achievement, had become overwhelming. He found it no longer possible to enthrone himself among his own grandiose dreams. He paused and gazed down upon the foredeck, which trembled to the roar of a winch lifting a huge packing case covered with heavy German lettering. He did not know what the words meant. He did not, at that moment, know anything at all. It seemed to him that he had lived so far without discovering anything of any value in the world. Was he destined, like old Mr. Punshon, to be mate of a tramp when he was sixty? He turned suddenly and walked back to the after rail. He saw James Wishart standing by the winch talking to the cargador. There was something wrong. A fireman came with tools, and for a moment or two they worked about the gear. And then, as the winch started off again with sudden energy and a squeal of blocks, James came over and climbed the short ladder to the second mate's side.

And James, a little pallid from his seclusion, made no remark. It was as though he had just that moment uttered the words on which Mr. Harris was basing his actions. And to them there was nothing to add. He had not been drawn by the second mate's excited profanity, or by his picturesque defamation of the old man. To Mr. Harris, at that moment, it seemed as if James had never become conscious of the comfortable illusions by which common men drug themselves against realities. It evoked a sort of angry incredulity in Mr. Harris because to him these illusions had become, as all drugs become, necessary in larger and ever larger doses. What he had desired in a vague fretful fashion to be revealed to him—the nature of character and personality—he beheld before his eyes, near yet unattainable. It was as baffling, the steady, unaffected demeanour of the young man, as was the candid silence of old Mr. Punshon. Neither of them was preoccupied with the impression he was making upon the outside world. When he was ashore, Mr. Harris described himself as mate of his ship. When, later, he landed a mate's billet, he would adjust his imaginary status accordingly. He recounted

episodes, with himself as the central actor, which he had heard from his fellow officers in dock-side dives. It was part of his code that such narratives should be accepted in tacit faith. And when he looked at James Wishart as the young man peered over the side at the water discharging from some pump in the engine room, the unuttered and almost unformulated thought in his mind was that James would never do that, would never have to do it. Everything was happening for him without his lifting, as it were, a finger. It nearly drove the second mate to dashing his cap on the deck. He felt a sudden and quite unreasonable disgust with old Punshon for not quitting his position and allowing a man to get ahead.

He made a furtive movement, as though the notion had stung him. It fructified in an unconvincing theory that it was all a matter of luck. It was at this moment that he saw James turn and catch sight of Yolanda under the poop awning. And even Mr. Harris, searching hurriedly for spiritual alibis, tormented by his own raw imperfections, understood that James had never expected to find her still on board the ship.

CHAPTER X

FOR the first time since the sun had risen that day silence settled upon the ship. At eleven o'clock the racketing uproar of discharging died away, and the cargadors, leaping down upon the jetty, hurried toward the town. The moon was rising, an enormous effulgence of tawny radiance, behind the cay. And beneath the awning on the poop, which flapped now and then in the offshore breeze, James and Yolanda spoke in low tones. He had drawn a camp stool near the deck chair on which she was lying, watching the lights of Puerto Balboa.

"*Querido,*" she had said with a sigh, "if this was the last time I should ever look at this place, how happy I should be!"

"And yet it is beautiful," he said. He pointed as he spoke to the distant scene—the long line of white sand and palms below the Pension Francia, the shadowy form of La Silla and the ominous glare of fires like volcanic craters on the mountains beyond the Corcubion valley. As she turned her head to follow the direction of his finger the moon behind them caught the white summits of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Agata. They appeared like a ghostly emanation out of the air, floating above the earth in unearthly grandeur, the abode of everlasting solitude.

"Yes," she breathed, "to you. But up beyond those sierras, where I have lived most of my life, *politicos* and priests and men like Don Orlando are forever at work. In San Benito everybody is watching everybody else. Do you know, *querido,* that if you were to go up there and walk down the Avenida del Sur or the Carrera Quinta, everybody would turn round and look at you, staring as if their eyes would fall out? They would ask each other, 'Who is that hombre? Where does he come from? Why does he come here?' And they would ask the *policia secreta* about it, and they would point you out and the *policia secreta* would go to the hotels and ask to see your name. They would visit you and demand your passport, and your cedula, which is a permission to travel in the country. And all the time they would watch you until you left the city."

"Why should they do that?" he asked gently.

"How should I know? All the police are soldiers, you see. The trouble, my friend, is that in this country all the good men are foolish and all the clever ones are bad. And both good and bad talk big words for small actions. Uncle Umberto Bustillo used to say, 'Too many Bolívars and no San Martíns.' The Modernistas say that too, in secret, but they are afraid of the *policia secreta.* They keep their mouths shut, pay the taxes, and make what money they can, while the *politicos* and soldiers control the government. No, for me this country is not so beautiful. I wish to go away, to England, to Europe, to North America."

She turned toward him in the darkness so that the glow from the open cabin skylight fell on her face, dead white with pearl powder, and he saw her lips form the words, "with you."

James did not reply. It had been a day of extraordinary tension for himself. When the old man had sent for him to the cabin and told him that he would have to take charge, he had been seized, unknown to anyone, with a brief panic. It had passed, and Captain Millerton, misunderstanding his silence, had said:

"You can do it, can't you, until we reach New York? You're qualified for a coastwise run."

James did not deny he was qualified, but pointed out that it was a surprising offer. And the engines would need a lot of shipyard work very soon.

Captain Millerton didn't tell him that Striker-Perkins would pay for it and not Harkelaw, Govanlock. He merely supposed James was man enough to get the ship as far as Rio Taga and back, a matter of a hundred and seventy miles, and from Puerto Balboa to New York.

James had afforded no definite information as to what he thought of his own powers. It was very much against his temperament to discuss anything like that. He might almost be said to be unaware of them. They had never involved him in any introspective mazes. To Captain Millerton he seemed also unaware of any pecuniary advantage attached to running the ship. The captain had said bluntly:

"The money's good."

It was, to James who had never earned half of what he was offered, "And a bonus at the end of the charter," the captain had remarked, adding with a peculiar grimace, "Thought you'd have a use for money now."

James could give no information about that, either. He had taken a look at the old man's face and had kept his own gravely illegible. He remembered that Yolanda had said the captain was her friend. And it occurred to him that Captain Millerton, behind that grimace, was viewing him as the hero of a fantastic street boy's romance. James was the industrious apprentice who was being promoted brilliantly and going to marry his employer's daughter. . .

The curious thing about James Wishart's life during these few days was that he could not deny the truth of that romantic picture. He could not see how, without being what he called to himself "a dirty cad," he could avoid the impending destiny. He had to go through with it, to take what fortune had set in his way. He was incredulous, nevertheless, that such fortune could be rightfully his own. He was reduced to a determination to carry on as well as he could. He could detect no valid reason for acting silly over it.

But when the long spell was over and the *Candleshoe,* eased of a thousand tons of machinery that might be guns and shells, and a couple of hundred cases of dynamite charges "For the Caravosa Tunnel," as the railway foreman told them, rose and sank gently on the vast Caribbean swell rolling in behind the cay, James knew that he would seek Yolanda's side. She knew it too, for she lay back in her chair and smiled as he suddenly appeared with that wistful boyish expression on his face. She did not know why, but that look made her want to hold his head savagely to her breast. He was aware of that desire as an unfamiliar, unbearably sweet thrill that made his scalp tingle and reduced him to silence. And yet not silence, for he seemed to be looking down at her while the air was shaking with sound waves from stupendous music suddenly stilled. The force and vehemence of that emotion appalled him in the face of the knowledge that he had done so little to deserve it. And if, in Havana, he had seemed to be stepping out upon a perilous pathway, through an unknown land of enchantment, darkly illumined by romantic passions, now he was in the midst of it, dizzy with its glamour, yet able to keep his head and to see where he was going.

So, when she said, "With you!" James preserved a distressed silence for a few moments, unaware that when a woman loves she interprets every negative quality in a man as a new reason for loving. She impales herself upon the sharp points of the

barriers he sets up about the portals of his heart. She will see her own folly and hide it from him. But James was not suspecting Yolanda of that. He did not know how a woman, hounded by some dreadful shred of ancient instinct, flings herself desperately at the feet of a man so that he can only escape over her dead hopes. He was appalled rather by the responsibility she was thrusting upon him, by the recklessness of her faith in him and in his power to create her own imaginary world of happiness in distant England or perhaps North America. He had not been shining successful at making paradises so far, he thought gravely, and turned to her to see her eyes watching him over the handkerchief she was holding. The perfume brought back the Malecon to him, and he put out his hand, his face suffused with inarticulate ecstasy, to touch hers.

"You have such faith in me," he said.

"I have never had faith in anyone else," she returned quickly. "And I could never have faith again. No! I am alone as much as that."

He wanted to take her in his arms and hold her close while he asked what she would do if he failed to carry her away. He had a clear conviction that even in love dishonour does not lie in failure. In that region of passion where she sought to imprison him he felt lonely, and he wanted to know how they would fare together, as it were, on earth among the homely folk he knew. But he was young and had not the courage to make it clear to her that men and women had to go on living.

"Men are not good to women," she said suddenly in the darkness. "You are not like them at all. The way you came into the Inglaterra that day. Tck!" she smiled to herself. "Tell me, *querido,* of that girl you loved in your country."

The moon, detaching itself from the dark ridge of foliage on the cay, floated off into space like a planished metal sphere. James turned to give Yolanda a startled glance, and his face was illumined by the shaft of light that streamed under the awning and threw a grotesque shadow on the side of a box car on the jetty.

"No," he said. "That is all over and done with." He sat staring at her with an expression of bewilderment as she took his hand and pressed it to her cheek. He realized that her words had evoked the image of a woman with a gallant carriage crossing the street after wishing him a pleasant voyage. A woman with white hands and dark blue eyes who looked into his

with an air of beautiful candour and disciplined courage. There was nothing of Marie Chisola remaining save a romantic memory, of which her scarlet tam o' shanter was the glowing symbol. Yolanda was unaware of the subtle change in the nature of her adversary. She had fastened with the speed of thought upon his murmured mention of a girl who had left him when he had trusted her. She wanted to know what she was like and what had become of her. But James, with tightened lips, turned his head and looked toward the town again. He sighed. For a moment it seemed to him that while Winifred Erskine had stood there saying goodbye surrounded by the familiar brightness of the sunlit Argyle Street and the vista of the shipping below them, he himself had been on the very brink of some vitally important discovery about himself. And now he regretted that he had been unable to make that discovery. He had had to go to sea, as it were, in the dark. It seemed to him, in a flash of intuition, that that moment had been one of the significant pauses in his life. And in his foolish way he had, he remembered, hastened away down Finniestoun Street without looking back.

He heard Yolanda say, "That makes me very happy, *querido*," and he was helpless before the movement of fate. His destiny was advancing upon him with inexorable strides. The image of that bright gallant figure, of the delicately vivid features and capable voice, would float off into space like the moon, a dead world illuminating the past; would fade completely.

As he sighed again he felt Yolanda's hand on his arm. "There is someone coming," she said. "Is it Rafael? I sent him to find out what they are doing."

He saw a man walking along the jetty in some agitation. The moon shone full on him, and James could see the uncertain yet hasty gait with which he came on past the empty flat cars. It was as though this man, whose footsteps they could now hear above the faint distant boom of the surf on the cay, was seeking a refuge from invisible assailants. More than once he looked back, pausing with one hand on a flat car; and then, with a glance at the ground, he came on again.

"He is coming on board," said James. "It is not the steward."

There was no one about the deck as the man, stumbling over the cargo slings littering the jetty, brushed past the two soldiers squatting by the gangway and came over the rail with such uncalculated speed that he pitched forward on the deck, bringing up against a pile of hatch covers. James saw him straighten

up and look about him. The impression that it was one of the sailors escaping from a raid on a posada died away. The figure was unfamiliar. James had gone to the poop ladder. He saw the night watchman come out of the galley and stand looking at the stranger. And then the latter, with a wave of his arm, came to the poop. He held out his hand as he ascended, his head thrown back and his eyes fixed steadily upon James. His large forehead was agleam with sweat as he thrust his hat farther back, and he was breathing heavily.

"Where's the captain?" he said in a low tone.

He sank down on the teak skylight seat and put his hands on his knees, while he seemed to study the deck where James was standing. The information that Captain Millerton was asleep seemed to transfix him for a moment.

"I wanted to see him," he muttered. He drew one hand down over his face and then stared at James, whose features were in shadow.

"My name's Claxon," said the stranger. As he spoke his eye fell on the chair with Yolanda lying beyond the scuttle, and he stopped. "Who's that?" he whispered. "Is it the girl who came in this ship? Eh, is it? Now, you needn't be afraid. I don't know who you are. Officer of the ship, of course. My name's Claxon, business man down here." He stood up and put his hand on James's shoulder. "I met your captain to-day, and he's certainly a mighty fine man. Just thought I'd have a word with him. You don't mind if I sit a bit? Fact is . . ."

He reflected and breathed with his mouth open as he contemplated Yolanda's dim figure.

"I'm afraid I've butted in—making myself a nuisance," he remarked.

"No," said James, "but I can't call the old man unless it's an urgent matter. He has had a long spell."

"And so have I," added Mr. Claxon in an absent fashion. "I'm pretty near all in. Had something happen rather upset me. Never mind calling the captain. I don't suppose he could do anything. Fact is, I come down here to see some white men. I'm very upset. I'll sit down, if you don't mind."

James let him take the stool he had been sitting on himself and stood by Yolanda, who lay perfectly still. She was watching the new arrival. His voice had come to her clearer than he had intended. She wondered who he was. While he talked she listened and gradually turned her head toward him. She raised

herself on her elbow and rested her head on her hand. And James gradually sank down to sit lightly on Yolanda's chair, so that their heads were close together.

It was one of Mr. Claxon's most valuable qualities that, even when people didn't like him, they listened to him. It was one of the secrets of his ability to carry out what he called his "transactions." Now he maintained his low, deliberate monologue without looking anywhere but at the faint constellation of lights behind the palms of the beach. He fixed his eyes, he who had been known for his preoccupation with women, upon the shore, and gave Yolanda no more than a passing glance.

Within that faint cluster of lights he had last seen Gina. He told his tale without smoothness or art. He was in a corner, and for the moment he was destitute of that rhythmical rhetoric in which he habitually concealed his thoughts. Only a faint trace of theatricality might have been detected, had there been an experienced auditor, in his voice.

"I was in the Cantina Sol, you understand," he said, "with the two men off this ship who have signed contracts to go up to Las Esmeraldas Concession, which is the property of my company. While in San Benito, I learned accidentally from a prospector, a chap named Harvey Hannerson, that in several places on our land he had found heavy deposits of iridium in the platinum ore. To-morrow I plan to take these men and go up to San Paulo to organize the party. To comply with the law I am promoting a subsidiary with a number of influential resident capitalists as vice-presidents. I needn't go into that now. I'm just explaining the background of the thing, to show you who I am.

"Well, we were in there, and the drinks were on me. I may as well come clean about it first as last—there's a girl in that place I think a lot of, if you don't mind my saying so. She's had a pretty raw deal in the past, but, if you ask me, she's as clean as a hound's tooth. There were several other girls there to-night, because the place was full of officers. They start, so I heard, with about two hundred of the troops, for Lake Cristobal.

"I wasn't paying much attention to what my two men, Barker and Humphries, they call themselves, were saying, because I was trying to get hold of old Barrillo, the owner of the place, to ask him where my girl was. She wasn't about anywhere. The others were serving drinks and dancing with the customers. Piano going all the time. Somebody putting in a quarter peso

as soon as the tune was petering out. My men were talking loud, though. Arguing, and then slapping the table with their hands. The young one was after one of the girls, and the other one, Barker, said, nothing doing. They'd both been drinking some, you understand, but there was no doubt they'd made some sort of pact, until they'd got a stake, to keep away from the señoritas. But the younger one was getting noisy.

"Old José was coming my way, and I signed to him to give these birds another round and asked him where my girl, Gina, was. You understand I hope, what I mean when I say she's my girl. If I hadn't a very definite interest there, I wouldn't be sitting here at this minute. José, looking very worried, says she's with his wife, who's a cripple. He said there were men present Gina didn't want to mix up with. He was telling me this, and I saw the young fellow Humphries listening for all he was worth and staring at me as though he was ready to jump up and go for me, when the colonel came in, Martinez and his staff. And José had to go and find them a table.

"Well, he was drunk, mind you. I've never seen anything like the way they'd upset Señora Munn, at the Pension. I went there later. I've just come from there. Señora Munn is all right. She's in her room with the door locked and her trunks piled against it. Señora Munn was insulted, I'm told. They opened her wine cellar and helped themselves when she told them they couldn't have any more. She's all right, but she's rattled. She's got a revolver, and she says she'll shoot anybody who tries to get into her room.

"Well, they were drunk, all right, and you know what men go for when they're drunk and have got all worked up with their power under martial law. They go for women. They sent for carriages and drove into town to the Cantina Sol. Five of them, Colonel Martinez and four other colonels. José says he received telegraphic orders this evening that he'd been gazetted general officer commanding the San Paulo division. Celebrating, you see. And when they came in and one of the tables was cleared of lieutenants and they sat down, it was plain what they'd come for.

"I was thinking of making a move. You see, I'm down here on business. I have had a good bit of experience in these countries, and I've found it best to sidestep their private quarrels. I was going to suggest we go along to the Pension and keep out of the way of trouble, when this chap Humphries says to me,

'Who was you talking about just now?' I said to him that it was no business of his that I was aware of, and he said he didn't know about that and he wanted to know who this Gina was he'd heard me mention. The other one, Barker, was trying to make him dry up, but he began to get ugly. I said to him, just as I'm talking to you here under this awning, that she was a girl for whom I had the greatest respect. He sat looking at me as though I was something he'd never seen before in his life. I told him that she had been treated with what I considered shameful cruelty by a man to whom she'd given her entire confidence. He was still staring at me when I saw Gina come through the door that leads upstairs.

"He says to me, 'Entire confidence, eh?' and then catches sight of Gina going across with a tray to the bar. The colonel was holding one of the other girls by the arm. When he saw Gina he turned round in his chair to get another look. He let the other girl go; forgot her. He clapped his hands for José to come to him. He told one of his officers to fetch Gina over to him. That was how it started.

"For me, when I saw Gina being pulled slowly toward the table where that fellow sat leaning back in his chair, I knew I would only make it worse for her if I acted like a fool. The place was full. Men were standing up all along the wall by the billiard tables and at the bar. The dancing stopped, of course, but the piano was still going. Everybody was watching. They brought a chair and set it next the colonel, and he pulled her down into it. He gave an order to old José, who was looking worried. José brought a bottle of champagne. The colonel took a glass and put it into Gina's hand, leaning over her. He put his arm round her waist. The stuff spilled over her clothes, his hand shook so. He was drunk all right.

"Those two chaps of mine were arguing while this was going on. Barker, he kept saying, 'Yes, and what can you do about it? Don't be a damned fool, Jack.' He turned to me and he says, 'Mister, let's get out of this. My mate,' he says, 'he's not himself.'"

Mr. Claxon sat leaning a little forward, his hands hanging over his knees, his eyes fixed with dreadful intensity upon the lights along the shore. He paused and held his hand over his mouth for a moment and seemed to be listening to far-off inaudible voices, getting the sense of what those voices were saying, arranging it in his mind before going on. Neither of his

hearers spoke. They were waiting because they knew he had not reached the events which had brought him on board. Yolanda lay stretched out in the chair, her hand to her forehead, her lips parted, thinking of Colonel Martinez, for she could see the scene with perfect clarity as that newly promoted brother of the war minister revealed his character in the Cantina Sol. And James, thinking of Faustine and the child he had seen in the Calle Animas, had his own reasons for hanging upon Mr. Claxon's words. It was a curious and characteristic thing that Mr. Claxon, who always gave what he said a slightly theatrical quality, and who was preoccupied with his own complexities, should have accepted the interest of his listeners as a matter of course, though they were not concerned with him at all.

"Not himself, you see. I'm frank to tell you I didn't get the drift of that remark. It just didn't occur to me how that chap was mixed up in it at all. I was too worried about what was happening to Gina. It was only when we were out in the Plaza that I saw what Barker meant. The other one was going to pieces. He sat down on the steps of the arcade and held his head in his hands. Barker says to him: 'Jack, he might as well know now as later. It won't do any harm and it may do good.' So he took me off a little way and told me.

"You see, neither of them had any idea what sort of woman Gina really is. The party who's taking care of her little girl in Havana gave them the notion she'd gone under for good. I'm not blaming them, mind you. Most girls would. And knowing she was here it was in Barker's mind to keep his mate out of her way. He figured that if they kept in the Plaza. . . . He said he never dreamed. . . . Then he begged my pardon. And I said it was granted. But I left him and went back into the café. I felt I never wanted to see that other man's face again.

"The carriages were still waiting. The drivers were standing looking in. The dancing was starting again, and I saw José and the comandante talking together at the bar. I went up to José and I said to him, 'Are you going to stop this or are you going to let him loot the town?' He holds out his hands and says, 'Señor, how can I stop it? They are going to take her away with them. He is the general.[1] They are all from San

[1] There are at the outset two members of the Martinez Family mentioned in the story. There is General Angelo Martinez, Minister of War in the government of Don Hernando Silva, and his younger brother Juan Martinez, a colonel at San Benito who is given the position of comand-

Paulo,' he says. I could see I'd get no help from him. I could see José was only thinking of himself. He didn't think it mattered much to Gina. The comandante says something to him. '*Si*,' he says, and tells me what the comandante said. 'If she plays her cards good, she will do a good thing for herself,' he says. Well, you can imagine. I pushed past and went up to this general.

"He was drunk, I told you. Yes, but it wasn't foolish drunk. He must have a head made of rock. He had hold of Gina's arm, and no matter how she pulled he didn't let go. Never even looked at her while he was talking to those other boot lickers round the table. And when I went up and spoke to him he looked up at me and made one of the others give me a chair and get me a drink. He didn't understand a single word of what I said. The noise of the piano and the dancing made it difficult. I went round to her and spoke to her. I said, 'Shall I make him let you go?' and she said, 'He is drunk. If you make him mad, there will be trouble.' I said, 'He's going to take you away with him; and she said, 'I know.'

"They were all talking. The general wanted to scare up some more girls and have a dance at the Pension, and some of the others were pointing out there was no time because he himself gave the order they were to move out at midnight. He didn't seem to remember what he'd ordered. He called the comandante over and they had a long argument. And the comandante—that chap with one eye—he went over and had a long argument with José. The general had now got the idea I belonged to his party and ordered another drink. I said to Gina, 'I am coming too.' She said, 'That is the best thing. By

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ante at San Paulo hitherto held by Captain Bustillo, nephew of the president's wife. Captain Bustillo is appointed to the comandancia at Rio Taga.

Upon the outbreak of the Conservative revolution, in which General Gonzalez descends the Camagua Valley and attempts to attack San Paulo, Colonel Martinez (Juan) is ordered to go down to Puerto Balboa to protect the port and to deal with the fresh menace of Bustillo's attack by sea in the *Sirena*. To fit him for this fresh command his brother (Angelo) who is as stated above, the Minister of War, appoints him general officer in command of the government forces. Hence he is referred to as colonel and afterwards as general.

In countries like Costaragua all colonels become generals, actual or potential, on the outbreak of hostilities.

The confusion of names is one of the inevitable difficulties of Latin American life.

and by he will sleep.' And soon after that he got up all of a sudden. They rose up round him—and Gina. I followed. They got into a carriage and I sat on the little seat in front. They were under the hood.

"You think I'm crazy, I guess, telling you all this. But I have a reason for it. I'm coming to it. Gina, she says to me, and that drunken swine had his arm round her neck too—she says in English, which he didn't understand, 'My poor friend,' she says, 'for this I will never leave you when we get away from here.' She says to him in Spanish, 'Ah, *Dios,* what do you want. Can I live without breath? You are like a *mozo.*' To me she says, 'Do not feel unhappy. Nothing would be any good. If you make trouble he would shoot you and put all of us in jail. Remember!' she says. 'Never will I forget this while I live.'

"The Plaza was full of soldiers camped round the statue. They stopped the carriage and an officer looked in. He saw the general and saluted. He looked sharp at me and asked me something I didn't catch. I said I spoke only a little Spanish. He asked the general something, and that swine said, 'Take him away.' And the officer called some soldiers. Gina said to me, quick, 'You had better go.'

Mr. Claxon paused and ran his tongue over his dry lips. He rose, and stepping to the rail lifted an earthenware water bottle from its hook on the awning spar. He drank a long time, remaining a silhouette with head thrown back, as though blowing on a ghostly trumpet.

"I had no choice. I was down there in the Plaza. They had a fire of railroad ties burning. The soldiers were sitting round it. I was down there on the ground among those chaps, and the carriage drove down the street at a gallop. The officer says to me, 'What are you? English, German, Dutch, or what?' I said I was an American citizen and I told him about Gina. He shrugged his shoulders. 'That's bad,' he said, 'but you can't do anything. You foreigners make too much trouble for us. There are some more there,' he said. And then Barker and his friend Jack came up to us. Barker says to me, 'Mister, you will have to get us out of this mess. They won't let us pass.' I said to the officer, 'We live at the Pension Francia.' The other carriage came up then, with the comandante on the box. When the officer spoke to him he called out, 'His Excellency is opening the Casa Bellavista.' And the officer answered him, and they laughed. The carriage drove on. The officer looks at some of the others

and they laughed again. Then he says, 'All right, Señores, you can go to your hotel.'

"When we got to the gate of the Pension I said to those two, 'Boys,' I said, 'I'm going after her. I made a promise to her and she made one to me, and I'm going to keep it. I'm not going up to San Paulo unless I do keep it. Are you coming with me?' 'What are you waiting for?' says Barker. The other one stands looking at the ground, and then he says, 'I'm on.' Well, I'll say he was.

"It's only a couple of minutes if you hurry along the beach to this house, which Gina had told me about. There was talk of opening it for entertainment, sort of casino. The comandante was going to rent it from old José. They wanted her to run it. Well, we saw the carriages coming back. We turned into the bush and let them get by, and then we climbed up to the house. There was a light in the room behind the veranda.

"What happened when we got up there was simply a smash and a fight. It happened so damn quick I can't sort it out in my mind. That chap Humphries, Jack, as he came up, had picked up a piece of rock. They were in the room behind the veranda, a large room. They had pulled the shutters together, but we could see them. There was a piano, and one of the officers was playing. Another was trying to light the candles. The comandante was telling an old woman where to put a tray of glasses. The general was in a big rocking chair. He was trying to make Gina sit on his knee. He was pulling her down and she was screaming at him to let her go. He was just getting ready to spring up at her when Jack, he pulled the shutter open and let fly that piece of rock at the lamp. 'Now you get her,' he says, and we went in. It was the last word he ever spoke."[2]

Once again Mr. Claxon turned away to the water chatty hanging on the spar. He left it swinging lightly, for it was empty, and took out his handkerchief to wipe his forehead.

"The last word," he repeated, as though to himself. "The lamp, one of these painted china things, simply flew in pieces, gave one flare, and went out. They never saw us. I heard fists landing on faces, and shouts, bodies falling, and Jack, he calls out, 'Ah! Ah!' as if he was coughing. I got hold of Gina, and I picked her up and rushed out with her. Barker, he came behind me. I never stopped. I heard him calling, 'Hey, Jack! Come on!' I never stopped. Gina said, 'I am all right.' I put her down and we ran to the Pension.

"Nobody about. The office was shut. Upstairs I went to Señora Munn's rooms. The dining room looked as if a cyclone had wrecked it. Three cats were on the table among the broken bottles and glasses tearing at a roast chicken. The chairs were upset and the pictures askew. And Señora Munn, as I told you, was barricaded in her room. When I knocked she asked who was there. When I told her she was glad to hear me. She pulled the furniture away and opened the door a crack. She had a revolver in her hand. I told her there was a young lady with me I wanted her to take care of. 'A young lady?' she says, 'Do you mean the Señorita de Mara?' I said no, a personal friend of mine. She opened the door a little more, and when she saw Gina, her clothes torn and a bruise on her face where she'd struck the shutter, that old nannie says to me, 'You mustn't bring that sort of person here, you know,' and shut the door and locked it.

"I said, 'Listen, Señora, I'm going to put this lady in my room and sleep on the porch. And you can do what you like. If you put her out you put me out. You hear me?' She wouldn't answer. I came away and I gave Gina the key of my room and saw her shut the door and lock it. 'Now,' I said to her, 'you are safe until I can do something about this.'

"I came out to the gate of the grounds, when the two carriages went by at a gallop, guitars twanging, girls singing la-la-la, lolita! Boys hanging on the steps and behind, and a couple of men on horseback following. The moon showed them all up as they went by. And then I saw Barker coming. That was when I first understood what had happened. He says to me, 'Mister,' he says, 'they got him. They're scared sick. Jack's either dead or knocked silly. They carried him down the steps and laid him on the ground, and then they stood round him. Waiting for the carriages to come back.' I said, 'You blame me, I suppose.' No, he said, he didn't do that. He said he knew all about Jack. 'He'd have been over the tables at that dago in the café if I hadn't held him back,' he said. 'What are you going to do?' I said I was going to see if a man I'd met yesterday could help me. A man from San Benito. I will admit I had expected to see him in the cantina, but he wasn't there. I took Barker with me, and we went up to this man's room. He's a colonel too, but it's a courtesy rank, I guess, him being director of the military school. Von Stücke, his name is. He and I went round last night, you see, and had a few drinks. Well, there was a light

under his door, and I called him. He let me in, and I told him, very briefly, what had happened. He was dressing himself. I asked him if he had been sleeping. He said, yes, he was going up to Lake Cristobal. He says, 'The general himself?' I said yes, and in my opinion there wasn't much to choose between Martinez and Gonzalez. 'You can't do anything,' he says. 'They'll only deport you both. It makes me sick,' he says, 'just at a time like this. Why,' he says, 'do you know the rebels are strong up at the Lake? It isn't Rio Taga he should attack, it is the Lake. I am going up,' he says. 'I had to get some sleep.' I told him what I had done with Gina and about Señora Munn. 'Oh, she always barricades herself like that. She has a lot of her money as well as her virtue in that bedroom, my friend. When the cargadors struck two years ago she was the same,' he says. And then he told me to use his room. But he would do nothing more because he said this Martinez has no use for him anyhow and it would make things worse if he interfered. He said to me, 'Get up to San Paulo as quick as you can. Take Gina with you.'

"Well, I went round to tell her what my friend said. But she wouldn't go to San Paulo. She said she was going back to the Cantina Sol in the morning. She said she would be safer there. But for me, I do not want her to go there any more. You understand, that is why I came to see the captain, to pay her passage. . . . I guess I'm pretty well upset. . . ."

He stood, one hand in his pocket, the other palm outward, as though having nothing he had not revealed to them. To their youthful visions he had unrolled a portrait of himself, a middle-aged man in the toils of love. He had shown them the girl, too, strong of heart and resolute in her struggle to escape the destiny of white women in a tropical port. He had shown himself grappling with a situation that had nearly defeated him because, through no fault of his own, he had no redress. He had spoken in a low, deliberate monotone, as though fearful of theatrical embellishment, his words standing out sharp and clear against the sullen glow of his emotion. He was like a being from another world revealing to them with tragic intensity the havoc love can play in the worn heart of a sensualist. And when he paused with hand outflung before him, his eyes on the lustrous surface of the sea below the dark loom of the cay, his head high in the shadow of the awning, he seemed to them to be waiting for their verdict,

to be aware of what lurked in their own hearts, and to be challenging them to discover any evil in his own.

"Well!" he said suddenly, breaking the spell under which he had held them by his sincerity and that faint touch of dramatic power. "What do you think of it? What shall I do to get her away?"

Yolanda lowered her feet slowly to the deck and came to a sitting posture beside James. They were both facing the man who had mysteriously broken in upon their tryst. As he looked down upon them, withdrawing his mind abruptly from that faint cluster of lights on the shore, he saw them as two lovers to whom he could confide the dilemma in which he found himself. He saw the girl put her arm on the shoulders of the young man and look at him with an expression of absorption, as though entranced by his very presence. And then she turned suddenly to Mr. Claxon.

"Go and bring her to the ship," she said quickly. "I will speak to the capitan and to the soldiers on the dock. She can come as my *camarada.* It is not good for a woman to be near that man. I knew him in San Benito. He came to this ship to-day, and the capitan shouted at him. He is the brother of the Minister of War and he thinks he can do what he likes. Here she will be safe. There is room in my cabin."

"Now," she said, as they watched him walking with his rapid ponderous stride along the jetty, "we must see if the capitan will say yes. By and by Rafael will come back. He is a costeno and can find out everything they do in this place. *Querido,* what do you say to all this? That man is of good age to love a girl, eh? What do you think?"

"It will be a good thing for you to have her here!" he said, in a low tone.

"You are tired of me? *Querido,* do you know what I have been thinking? I think that you do not love Yolanda."

He brought his face close to hers and looked into her glowing eyes with a clear gaze.

"No? And why do you think that? Because I do not make a lot of noise?"

"Not that, *querido.* I think you do not love Yolanda because you have made her so much ashamed."

"How?" he exclaimed. She pressed close to him as he put his arms about her.

"How?" she repeated. "Is it the custom in your country to

let a girl ask you to marry her and then say nothing? Does she not deserve an answer? You told me that other love was all over and done with. Yes, but how do I know if you leave me ashamed?"

Her lips were close to his own as she spoke, and the magic of her body made him dizzy. The firm round whiteness of her arms was about his neck, and she clung to him. Her eyes closed, and she seemed to swoon in his arms as he gave himself up at last to the glamour of the night, to the sweet sorcery of passion.

Jack Humphries, stretched out on a wooden bench in the surgery of the railway company's doctor, opened his eyes slowly for the last time and regarded his old friend Mr. Barker with an expression of thoughtful omniscience. And then it seemed to Mr. Barker that Jack was about to reveal something of immense significance, something that would explain how he felt about Gina, for his jaw moved and his mouth opened, as it had often opened in life, before he shouted.

CHAPTER XI

DIARIES are well known to be indexes of character by what their writers omit to set down. Captain Millerton's scrap log during the three days before the *Santa Brigida* came into Puerto Balboa owed its value to no literary merits or private confessions. He had made up his mind to keep this record as soon as he left Havana, "just to protect myself," as he put it in his mind. He knew that sooner or later he would stand once more in the office in St. Vincent's Square, Glasgow, and it remained of prime importance to him to have a clear record. Even the prospect of making some extra money, to buy another boarding house at Bournemouth, did not distract him from this matter of a clear record. And he knew from experience how events are snarled into unrecognizable knots of confusion by the passage of time. So he set down in terse sentences, written in a surprisingly elegant and flowing hand, the events of those three days.

He began always with the weather. The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta was already cloud capped, and the nearer mountains, luminous at night with fires of fields being burned over, were gray by day with smoke and vapour. The thermometers, wet and dry bulb, were noted, and the temperature of the sea water. And then:

This day was reported to me death of J. Humphries, who was stabbed in a fight with soldiers in a house on the beach. As this man was paid off 3 P. M. and death took place at midnight approx. no liability attaches to master of the ship. T. Barker, late chief engineer, reported missing by consul after inquiry.

This day my passenger, Miss de Mara, came to me and requested permission to take a stewardess as she feels uncomfortable alone on ship. Woman was already on board and working, taking Miss de M. her breakfast. Gave permission subject to regulations. After breakfast received letter (in file) from man named Claxon explaining situation with regard to the woman recommended by Miss de M. Satisfactory.

Interview this noon hour with consul, who came on board. Confirm reports brought to me during night by steward that government troops left town about 1 A. M. to attack insurrectos at Lake Cristobal. Pointed

out to consul danger of attack by *guardacosta Sirena* unless same is located. Consul stated to me *Sirena* reported ashore about twenty miles down the coast. Information from comandante, who received same from a *tortuguero* who came in with load of shell and turtle meat for the market.

Note: she may get off. Note: filibusters probably in touch with insurrectos. Consul agreed this might be the fact. He said no danger from one-pounder gun on *Sirena* owing to lack of ammunition. Fresh supply in number two hold. Ordered chief off, to set watch at night.

Captain Millerton was an old hand. In days gone by, when mate of adventurous tramp steamers, he had sat up all night rewriting the ship's log to suit some new and unforeseen contingencies. In his private scrap log, which he kept, as he would have said, "for his own benefit," he left strategic gaps in the writing. He knew how to fill them up with conventional remarks if they turned out to be unnecessary. And here, after noting that a night watch had been set, he left a space. He wrote out the item on a sheet of paper and left exactly enough room for a copy.

Miss de Mara came to my cabin this evening after supper and said she was going ashore to live at the Pension Francia. I said it was a good idea. She said she would take the Italian woman with her as lady's maid, this woman's intended having gone to San Paulo. I said this was a good idea because this ship was not fitted up for ladies. Miss de Mara then said she must get married at once. I told her not possible by master of ship in harbour. She said that was not her reason for telling me. Consul could do it legally, but master of ship must give his permission for James Wishart to go ashore for that purpose. I called J. Wishart, now acting chief engineer, and he requested permission in writing. Told him if ship remained on time charter he would have to leave wife in New York first trip. He said he quite understood. While the ladies were in their cabin I asked him if he knew consequences of what he was doing. He said he understood, could not take any other course under the circumstances. Told him if any trouble followed on arrival of lady's guardian remember I warned him against it. He said he took all responsibility but could not do otherwise under circumstances. He repeated this several times. I went so far as to point out risk, according to my experience in these parts, of marriage with foreigners. Best to marry at home were the words used. He said he had the same opinion but in the circumstances he was unable to back out. He used the words "back out." He then became confidential and said the lady had put herself in his care, that she had no prospects now she had broken with her guardian, and he had accepted the responsibility. I said he was hanging a millstone round his neck

because he could never support her in the way she was used to. He made no answer to this but seemed to understand what was meant. He went ashore with the two ladies, and the steward got some men to carry their dunnage.

At this point Captain Millerton went on with his record.

The steward reported to me when he returned on board to-night that T. Barker, late chief here, is missing. He was seen walking out alone on the river road and had not returned. He had refused to go up to San Paulo this morning on the train with Mr. Claxon, who has engaged him, promising to go to-morrow. He said he wished to see his mate buried first. The doctor at the yards says T. Barker acting strange over death of his mate. Steward heard in a cantina in the Plaza that the fight took place in a house on the north beach and was over a woman. J. Wishart, acting chief eng., turned over to me two hundred dollars, money belonging to J. Humphries deceased, having been won in lottery in Havana. As deceased was paid off yesterday, I told J. Wishart money must be left in charge consular agent for benefit of deceased's family. To this, to my surprise, J. Wishart said money should go to the Italian girl Gina Rovelli, who has a child in Havana. Father of child is J. Humphries, born out of wedlock. Have decided to turn business over to consul.

This day have discharged all heavy pieces containing laundry machinery, same having been consigned to San Benito. Messrs. Leake & Co., agents, have given me full receipt for this consignment which is load off my mind. Chief off., Mr. Punshon, called me as heavy case broke when swung over hatch coaming, and when carpenter removed broken parts of crate found breech block of modern 12 p. Q. F. gun and recoil gear packed inside laundry machine. Large crates of artillery wheels in after hold, also complete field kitchen and hospital outfit.

Weather to-night: heavy storms on the mountains, wind blowing from east in heavy gusts, with some rain. Very hot in cabin. Chief off. reports 2d off. Harris ashore, whole evening up to 1 A. M. Note: drop hint in morning. Otherwise all well.

While the captain was rapidly inscribing these words in one of those shiny black exercise books which he used in the chart room for night orders, Mr. Leake was also setting down the events of Puerto Balboa in the diary which he kept in the drawer of the table on his porch. Mr. Leake had no professional apprehensions to involve him in a complicated loose-leaf system of reporting. He sat on his porch, high above the darkened town, while the moon showed like a faint, rapidly moving, luminous mist behind the racing clouds. He sat high up and looked down upon the movements of the *Candleshoe's*

crew, upon Señora Munn and Mr. Claxon, like a god contemplating the confused phantasmagoria of a half-understood world. Indeed, without assuming divine powers, this image often haunted him in the night hours of insomnia, and he expressed it in a characteristic manner.

It is a remarkable fact [he wrote] that the early inhabitants of this region people the earth, the air, and the waters under the earth with many gods, but they credited no deity with omniscience or even omnipotence. Some were more easily placated or hoodwinked than others; but all could, by means of some mental dexterity, be deflected from their avenging purposes. Even the Great Spirit, the serpent-skirted goddess, whose coiled body is the earth, who is so often pictured with a human being in her jaws, whose convulsive shudders are earthquakes and who will some day bring all to an end, is not credited with omniscience. Many gods, indeed, seem to have been worshipped not because they were intelligent but because of their stupidity. Men did not know when those awful invisible beings, whose breath stirred the trees in the forest and whose voices crackled across the volcanic ridges, would suddenly strike. And among these gods they pictured one as a heavy brooding figure with an enormous feathered helmet, with ponderous necklaces of jade and obsidian, gazing down upon human beings below his throne. The expression on the face of this figure can be construed neither as malignancy nor compassion. He seems to gaze as we gaze down upon a swarm of insects in a hole in the ground. He sees the movements of men and wonders what they are doing. But he is unable to understand anything of men's motives. He too suffers, and all that he knows is that neither gods nor men can help him. His equality with the former and his power to destroy the latter are of no value to bring him happiness.

Mr. Leake put down his pen and took a turn to and fro on the floor of his porch. He had reached a period in life when solitude had become congenial. He no longer felt any bitterness toward his wife for leaving him alone in Costaragua. He did not accuse her of infidelity because he knew—what she knew—that the original infidelity lay in himself, that he had never even considered sacrificing his scheme of life to her. It was softening now all the acerbity of the first lonely years. He was forgiving her before he was ready to forgive himself for making a mistake. He walked to the western end of his porch and stood looking at a stone sculpture, in high relief, of the figure he had just been describing. It stood on a narrow ledge made for it, above a table bearing English magazines, cigarette boxes, and a photograph of Mr. Leake's parents, arm in arm,

in an old-world garden. The sculptured deity looked down, with his profoundly puzzled, enigmatic gaze, upon these symbols of an alien civilization. Mr. Leake had found this slab, badly broken, in an Indian hut near Cordoba while making one of his little excursions into the dense jungles of Las Esmeraldas. There were cities of stone in those jungles, temples of extraordinary magnificence, and there was the sacred pool which Mr. Leake had sometimes wanted to have dredged. If the legends were true, he would discover some strange treasure trove in that pool. He knew a man in San Benito who had fished up the slender bones of a girl with a jade necklace hooked in the ribs. But this piece of sculpture was really more to his taste. It had character and even beauty in its execution, and it expressed for him that aloofness of Costaragua which persisted in spite of all that Striker-Perkins might do to bring progress and modernity to its shores. For untold centuries that grayish face with its slanting forehead and blunted yet curved nose, its insolent negroid lips and heavy-lidded eyes, had looked down upon the small crushed figures beneath its feet. And with the passing of empires it had fallen, and a poor Indian, in need of a slab to support his stone water cooler in the lean-to kitchen behind his mud and palm-leaf hut, had dragged it home. Mr. Leake, stooping to get a drink from the bowl, had noticed the inner face of that slab, covered as it was with green scum and foul droppings.

He liked it. It expressed for him the vanity of human achievement. He liked to believe that the man who sculptured that austere alien face was as confident of the durability of his race and culture as Mr. Leake himself was of his own. It was this reversed emotion which inspired him to look down from his vantage upon Puerto Balboa, that tiny clearing which his own race and culture had achieved against the enormous background of forest and swamp and mountain ranges. In his heart he believed that England—Britain—would never die as the Mayan, the Roman and Carthaginian empires had died. In his mind he knew that she would, that the essential qualities which made him what he was, which identified him with Englishmen all the world over, would dissolve and form the basis of newer breeds.

He walked back to his desk.

If he were looking now at Costaragua, and especially at the events proceeding in Puerto Balboa, such a god would be more perplexed than ever. He would see a number of confusing features and he would

be unable to convince himself that human beings were actuated by any logical motives whatever.

The insurrection which has been in course of development in the Camagua Valley, having for its objective the blocking of the railway extension through Caravosa, Ortygia, and the highlands to San Benito, came suddenly to a head yesterday morning, when General Gonzalez, at the head of seven hundred *llaneros*, crossed the new railway above San Paulo, destroying a half-finished trestle bridge over a deep barranca, and swimming the Corcubion on their horses. Firing on the river boat coming down from Cordoba they wounded several passengers. They have now extended in a line as far as Lake Cristobal and are supposed to be concentrating in the village at lake head with a view to simultaneous attacks upon Puerto Balboa and San Paulo. Colonel Martinez, who was gazetted general immediately, was ordered to occupy Puerto Balboa. This man, who owes his position entirely to his brother's influence, made his disposition to send a small force up the river road toward Lake Cristobal to establish contact with the insurrectos and check any sudden assault on the town. He then proceeded to get extremely drunk in company with his officers at the Pension Francia, frightening Senora Munn so that she retreated to her rooms, and causing considerable damage. The reason for this unseemly behaviour on the part of a government general is apparently private. Repulsed in his advances to a certain young lady on board of the ship in the harbour, General Martinez reacted after the manner of his type. He then, at a late hour, abducted a girl from the Cantina Sol, and in company with his officers, all of whom were intoxicated, drove out to a house on the beach owned by José Barrillo, the landlord of the Sol. Here a most extraordinary sequence of events took place. It appears, from a conversation I have had with an American, Mr. Reid B. Claxon, who has become so deeply enamoured of this girl—an Italian—that he intends to take her back home with him, that some years ago she was the mistress of a man on the ship now in the harbour. This man was paid off yesterday and with another Englishman had been engaged by Mr. Claxon to go up country on a short prospecting trip. They were in the Cantina Sol and saw the whole thing. The American led his two men along the beach to the house, and by a sudden rush secured the girl and escaped. This man, the former lover, however, received a knife thrust in the body and died later in the railway doctor's surgery.

The result of this somewhat sordid affair became immediately apparent. Not knowing who had attacked them and impressed by the demeanour of the girl herself, who works at the Cantina Sol, the sobered general and his officers held a consultation. They sent the comandante to the Cantina to have the wounded man taken away. They then decided to leave a force of fifty men camped in the Plaza and take the remainder at once to Lake Cristobal. Evidently the general, who is a cowardly ruffian, expects the business to blow over. Quite possibly it will, because the chances of getting any evidence out of his own men is small. But the fact is his change of orders is all for the best. It spares

us the danger of a battle in the outskirts of the town where many poor people live. And it simplifies the social problems involved in meeting a man of the Martinez type.

Much of this information I have obtained in conversation with the American, Mr. Claxon, and Captain Millerton, *S.S. Candleshoe,* now in port. But a most surprising development took place last night when the workmen of the shops suddenly rushed the calabozo by the barracks and released a beachcomber named Pelham, who had been locked up by Martinez for organizing the men into a union to press for various labour reforms in the railway. Pelham is now one of the big men of the quarter behind the church. He has announced that on the arrival of the administrador he will demand a conference, declining to speak with any other official. The officer of the soldiers in the town is afraid to attempt any reprisals, as he knows the police are friendly with the workmen. The manager of the railway company here has accepted the terms for the time being in order to keep the trains running. Don Francisco is expected to-morrow or the day following. Nothing can be done until he arrives.

It is very curious that the whole situation seems to devolve not upon the president and the Martinez family but upon Striker and Perkins. Without actually creating a junta of their own, these two men have the real power in the country. It is the realization of this fact which inspires the younger men active in the insurrection, especially Bustillo, who sees his own family dominated by Don Francisco, and Don Carlos, who poses as a New Liberator leading the patriots against the capitalist dynasty. Captain Millerton is very concerned about the *guardacosta* which these two young men have seized, and in which they tried to board him on his arrival, thinking Don Orlando was on his ship. The *Sirena* has gone ashore, however, down the coast, and the crew have probably joined the insurrectos on the Rio Taga–Cristobal trail. The men of the railway shops have been working late and now have the heavy material in their charge behind the boiler-shop gates. By to-morrow they will be able to defend the railway at any point.

Yes, on those two men, so utterly unlike in character, in heredity, and even in ideals. And yet, are their ideals so widely dissimilar? They seem to live in different worlds, oblivious, save on formal occasions, of each other's existence; yet the actions of the one fit into each other like component parts of a mechanism. Anything that comes in conflict with those actions is caught and crushed. Don Carlos is like a butterfly trying to stop a cane mill. This American, who had been sent down here to deal with them over a concession, is scarcely likely to have any better luck. His only chance is to have them with him, but it is not much of a chance just now. And the Gonzalez faction, who are acting as the leaders of the Camagua *llaneros* and the young intellectuals who dread the regime of Martinez and his brother in the presidential palace, will be lucky if they can escape over the frontier. One of my clerks has heard the story in the Cantina Sol, that the family of War Minister Martinez, now in New York, is leaving on the mail boat at once

to be present at the inauguration. This is quite possible, for the telegraph wire, which was cut by Gonzalez, is already repaired.

The Following Day:

To-day, while at work in my office, arranging with the captain of the *Candleshoe* for the shipment of fifty thousand quintals of coffee to New York, I received a visit from a man perfectly well known to me by sight but otherwise more or less of an uncertain quantity as I do not frequent his premises. I refer to José Barillo, who keeps the cantina. As he is a native Costaraguan from Cordoba and has done most of his business with Gonzalez & Co. there has been no contact between us.

At first I was under the impression that he was inquiring about some cases of spirits he had ordered through Gonzalez and as a matter of fact he used this consignment as a reason for calling. But when we were alone he said he had come to tell me that he had word from the Lake. Martinez, instead of pushing through and gaining control of the Rio Taga–San Paulo road, camped beside the Lake. The insurrectos were not strong enough to rush the place but succeeded in cutting off a detachment and the government troops are scattered through the jungle. Colonel von Stücke, who was with the advance, charged the insurrectos and occupied the village on the trail. Gonzalez and Martinez are now hunting one another in the bush. Von Stücke sent back one of his men to the comandante to ask for assistance to hold the village and cut off the insurrectos from Rio Taga.

Having given me this news, which he said he had from the comandante, Señor Barillo said he supposed I would know all this in a few hours officially. He then hesitated. I asked him if there was anything else he wished to tell me. He finally said he believed I was a supporter of Striker-Perkins. I said I was a supporter not only of Striker-Perkins but of the government. To this he replied that he was also loyal to the government. He asked because he wished to know whether I was a friend *(amigo)* of Don Orlando. I said not a friend but a business associate. He then told me that Don Carlos Almanzor had been seen in the town. He had been among the workmen who released the beachcomber Pelham last night, Barrillo said. I asked him what all this had to do with Don Orlando. José replied that Don Carlos had come in for the purpose of killing Don Orlando out of revenge for imprisoning him in San Benito. He had believed that Don Orlando was on board the *Candleshoe*. The comandante, who was locked up by Bustillo the other morning, has begun to search the town but no trace of Don Carlos can be found.

I now asked José Barrillo why he confided this information to me. He pushed out his lips, looked at me very solemnly, and came close to my elbow. He said he warned me because the *Santa Brigida* was due to-morrow morning with Don Orlando on board and he would have with him six hundred men paid off from the Canal Zone. What for? I asked. He said he did not know, but he thought for up country.

They were to be taken down to Rio Taga and over the foothills of the Cordillera to the Colorado Valley.

At this point I came to the conclusion that Barrillo was to a certain extent in Don Orlando's confidence. He said, as if to corroborate my unspoken thought, that he was to look after these men while they were in Puerto Balboa. He said he had done a lot of little jobs for Don Orlando. But it was obvious he had no information concerning the company's plans for a hydro-electric development on the Colorado River. His reasons for coming to see me were not connected with Don Orlando's business schemes, because he still hesitated, as though afraid to commit himself too far. I was not surprised at this, because he is evidently playing some game of his own in the town. I put this to him in so many words, for I have never had any difficulty in handling these people without a lot of ambiguous discussion. He said: "Señor, my place is under the protection of Don Orlando, and I serve him faithfully. I know the Señorita Yolanda de Mara is one of his family. They say he will marry her. But I hear in my place to-day from the gardener of the Pension, who heard it from a housemaid, that she is to marry an Inglez to-day." I said: "Yes, they have applied here for the necessary papers." He was thunderstruck. He said: "*Dios,* Señor! What will Don Orlando say to me when he arrives?" I said: "Why should he expect you to interfere?" He gave me a long and very mysterious glance. My opinion is that this man has been in a number of shady transactions as Don Orlando's agent. I have no proof, but the thoughts which seemed to me to be hiding behind that lugubrious and preoccupied expression on his face were decidedly disquieting.

I asked him if there was anything more, because if not I wanted him to remember that it was his house in which the fight took place, resulting in the death of a man from the ship. Señor José seemed uncomfortable at this and said he had nothing to do with it. The general was the man to ask about that. He, José, had lost a good *criada* into the bargain. Then Señorita Yolanda had taken her as a servant. They were at the Pension. He then asked *me* to remember that the workmen, electricians and machinists, came to his place to drink their *cerveza.* Only the labourers and dock rats went to the New Bristol House. He had to look after his business. He had to keep his balance—he held his hand out, palm on edge, to show me what he meant by balance, and he hoped I would explain to Don Orlando that the marriage was something José Barrillo had no power to stop, except . . .

"Except what?" I asked him. He gave me his long mournful look again and mumbled that a business associate of Don Orlando, a *caballero* and an Inglez—she was going to marry an Inglez—might know if Don Orlando wouldn't approve of some accident happening to prevent such a thing. To this delicate insinuation I replied that I was not sufficiently in Don Orlando's confidence to offer any opinion. He gave me another lugubrious stare and began to retire.

As a matter of fact, the news about Miss de Mara had not surprised me at all after my interview with Mr. Claxon. There have been, I hear, several affairs in which her name has been mentioned, faint disturbances of the heavy atmosphere of San Benito's social world, where Yolanda de Mara has never succeeded in identifying herself with the conventional young ladies of the first families. The captain of the *Candleshoe*, in spite of his rather disagreeable manner and his incessant preoccupation with the risks he is running out here, is by no means afraid of accepting his legitimate responsibility. He said he would have attended to it himself if he had been at sea. The young man, he thinks, has interests at home with the firm.

When they came into the office this afternoon I received a shock, Miss de Mara was so changed from what I had remembered of her. She was so unmeasurably more beautiful that she seemed hardly the same person I had seen sitting, perfectly wooden and sullen, opposite Don Orlando at the Pension Francia, a sort of smouldering flame in her eyes. As she came in and stopped by the door for the young man, there was a distinct change in the atmosphere. I rose, of course. The place seemed more brilliantly illuminated. Some women have this quality of making wherever they happen to be more vivid. In view of what took place so short a time after I can never regret the part I took myself in this affair. On the other hand, because of that dénouement I am unable to form any clear picture in my mind of what took place. I remember saying, either before or after, "You ought to be churched," and she said, "Yes, in New York." And she made another remark, as though explaining their haste. She said, "Everything has been settled between us, but I do not wish to change my mind." Everything settled between them. That also I find of special significance in the light of what has followed.

The other—the young man—although he had so little to say, did not give me an impression of being subdued, but under the influence of a novel and overpowering emotion. Perhaps experience as well, I may as well say. Unspoiled, and of a type not encountered very often on ships. Very competent in spite of the strange situation in which he found himself. I hear he took her to the Pension and then hurried back to the ship, to his work.

This evening a telegram from Don Francisco. He is at San Paulo and arrives here to-morrow. The insurrectos have been firing on the river boats and have killed several people. The railway people have been assembled. One quick-firing field gun and one machine gun and a force of twelve men have started for Colonel von Stücke's camp by the river road. The *Santa Brigida* ought to be in to-morrow with mails from home. It will be curious to see how the presence of these two men will suddenly clarify the situation.

CHAPTER XII

MR. BARKER had had no ideas in his head of going anywhere after the funeral. He had nowhere to go, no one to speak to, and nothing to do. It was not for this that he had left the *Candleshoe*. He was no longer the truculent, confident man who had loved to make Captain Millerton's life wretched; who had looked forward with uncompromising fortitude to a job in the interior. As he wandered up the Calle del Mar, after entering the Plaza, his old brown waterproof and greenish-gray felt hat glistening with a sudden downpour, he was not the same man. He turned away as from an unendurable agony when he found his footsteps taking him down toward the ship, toward the Pension Francia, where he had lain awake the rest of the night.

Especially from the ship did he recoil. He had told that fellow Claxon that to-morrow, perhaps, he would go on up to San Paulo. He and Gina, without speaking a word, had followed the hearse, with its awful monkey-tree plumes, through the rain to the cemetery. To Gina he had been even more than a stranger. He had been a man who knew what she had been in Havana, and the silence between them had been like a wall. She had not even looked at him during the time they were together. She had gone through with it as an iron duty, while he had been there because Jack was the only person in the world for whom he had any emotion. Probably it had been this very feeling which had hardened her. She seemed very handsome in a black frock—handsome and hard. He wondered why she had come; she did not think anything of Jack. He had walked away, leaving the carriage to her, in a stupor, conscious only of an unbelievable loss. He had never comprehended before how much that quarrelsome, difficult, disreputable man had been part of his life. He saw now that the idea of leaving the ship had grown out of their unconscious craving to go into a new experience together, to get away from the heckling pettifogging of the old man, the stale hopelessness of that old engine room, the iron ring of the horizon. And with the loss of Jack

he seemed to himself now to be a lost soul wandering naked in an alien land of moist heat. By his own act he was cut off from the ship. He could never go down to her again. But as he wandered up the high narrow sidewalk of the Calle del Mar he seemed to feel he could never go anywhere again. He was oppressed with a vision of himself wandering on and on through this vista of dripping eaves and rustling foliage, with the distances dissolving in warm mist, the green of the mountains floating like islands above his head. A dull ache at his heart bewildered him. He, who had never known grief or sorrow, who had been a man of secular contacts, now did not recognize grief when it walked beside him. He stepped over obstructions and pools of water like a man walking in his sleep. Naked children, their bulging bellies protruded from doorways below their brilliant dark faces, retreated as they caught sight of the oblivious figure with downcast eyes and long, bedraggled moustache drooping across the gray stubble of his unshaven cheeks. Statuesque men on mules, in ponchos and big hats, turned their heads slowly as they passed and watched the gringo plashing in canvas shoes through the rain. And out where the houses no longer lined the track, but stood on posts above tall grass, the dark costeno women looked out with fixed stares at him like sentries descrying some unusual happening beyond their fortifications. The pigs, long, tapering creatures with malignant eyes, swerved away from him with volleys of grunts. And as he wandered on toward the river the women came again to their doors and looked after him in anxious perplexity. Not long since they had seen the soldiers go that way with a vast rustle and clank of gear. They had heard the noise in the night and seen the flare of a torch as the guide on his mule went ahead. They understood very little of that business. And to them the sight of this mysterious gringo was even more disturbing.

To him it no longer mattered what people thought of him. The loss of the man with whom he had fought and worked so long had the effect of a physical dismemberment. Something of himself was dead, and the remainder was useless and full of pain. He saw himself as nothing any more. His pride, which had been the basis of his life, now had nothing to rest on. All the varied achievements of humanity, of art, of government, of business and of religion, had meant nothing to him, and now he was nothing to the world. He was no more than a piece of driftage with a few pounds in his pocket. His spiritual integ-

rity had been concerned solely with the ship and his friend. Now he had lost both, thinking one could compensate him for the other.

He walked on and presently came upon a pulqueria of wattle and mud. It was here that the road, descending to the left, found the Tortuga River, which came down from the lake. Across the steaming bank he could see the dull gray stream and the mist-enshrouded shore overtopped by wooded hills. Perhaps he thought the road ended there, and halted unconsciously. Perhaps he realized how wet his feet were. He turned and climbed on the little stoop beneath the overhanging palm thatch, where there were chairs and a table. And then, through the unglazed opening of the window he saw a young man in a poncho smoking a cigarette, who gave him a sudden brilliant glance and rose to his feet.

He had been seated on a low stool of rawhide, talking with the family. By the earthen stove at the back stood his high boots. Without taking his eyes from the head of Mr. Barker, which was visible after he had sat down, the young man pointed to his boots to have them brought to him. He stuck out his legs one by one, and a girl of twelve, nearly naked, thrust the still-lamp things over his small shapely feet. He stamped and then strode to the opening. He folded his arms on the wooden shutter frame and looked down upon a shining head of sparse black hair and a thick red neck rolled against a wet collar.

At first he was astounded to discover that the man sitting there, holding a heavy English gold half-hunter watch in his hand seemed unaware of his own existence. Mr. Barker looked at the watch without knowing what he was doing. He put it back in his pocket, set his elbows on the table and made a feeble attempt to dry his moustache with a handkerchief. He ran the water off his hat brim. And then he looked around.

"What are you doing here, my friend?" asked the young man, in English, without moving.

Mr. Barker gave him a second look and pulled out a briar pipe and a tobacco tin.

"Eh?" went on the young man. "You understand me, of course? You are English, of course? What are you sitting out here for? You must give some explanation of yourself."

The surface of Mr. Barker's mind twitched.

"To you?" he said, looking off at the rain-swept river.

"Well, why not to me?" said the young man. "You have not come here to enjoy the beautiful scenery, I suppose."

He spoke in a tense, vibrating tenor voice. Mr. Barker looked round at him again. The young man was perplexed at the cool insolence of a man who could sit with his neck exposed to the downward drive of a knife. From where he stood the young man could reach a machete on a chair which could with one blow . . . And he would not even turn completely round to speak.

"I'm not in your way, am I?" said the man outside. He put away his tin box and lighted his pipe.

The young man suddenly vaulted over the frame of the opening and sat on the table beside Mr. Barker.

"Yes!" he said, leaning close. "You might be very much in my way if I don't find out who you are."

Mr. Barker turned his tired bloodshot eyes upon the young man. He had never been so lonely in his life. Something in that young face, very dark, yet clear and handsome, very intelligent, aroused him. A faint stir of memory made him blink. It was something he had just glimpsed, long ago, before Jack had gone away. Pipe in hand, his eyes on the river, he tried to sort out the events of the previous days. He gave it up. It didn't matter.

The young man studied him with increasing perplexity.

"You don't understand what I say?" he murmured. Mr. Barker turned his eyes slowly and looked at him again.

"Understand what you say?" he repeated. "What is it you say? Who the hell are you? What do you want? Am I doing any harm sitting here?" He struck another match on his thumb nail.

"That is all right," said the young man. "I see you are from the English ship. You work for the company, eh? You are with Colonel Martinez, I suppose?"

"I'd swing for him, if that's what you want to know," said Mr. Barker in a perfectly level voice.

"Swing for him?" queried the young man. "Ah, now I understand. Yes? And you come along here all the way from the town to find him?"

"No," said Mr. Barker. "My mate, he's dead and we buried him. And I came for a walk."

The young man leaned back on his hands and stared at the conundrum in front of him. Then he said:

"To use your English words, I would swing for him too. And I want to get into Puerto Balboa. I have come from over the river, from the *Sirena.*"

"Now, I remember," said Mr. Barker. "What's stopping you?"

"I am too well known," said the young man. "You must help me."

"He isn't there any more," said Mr. Barker. "All gone to fight the revolutionists."

"I know, and the revolutionists will get him. Very soon they will be in Puerto Balboa and in San Paulo."

"Well, it's nothing to me."

"Yes, it is something to you. You can help me. Listen to me. I have a girl, a sweetheart in Puerto Balboa. I wish to go in and see her. But if I go alone it will look suspicious. You lend me your coat and that hat and come with me to the Pension."

Mr. Barker looked with a faint trace of interest at the author of this proposal. They were all after girls, he thought. If it had not been for a girl Jack would be alive now. He forgot the young man while looking at him. His face turned gray and stony. He heard as through a wall the young man saying that there was no choice—he must lend him the clothes. In exchange. For girls, he reflected, men got themselves knifed and robbed. They committed murders and left their wives and families. He remembered many novels he had read, and they all focussed on a girl. He was beginning to realize that, so far as he himself was concerned, that was all twaddle. He had accepted it as gospel. Now he looked at this young man again with his clear dark face, illumined by some enigmatic resolve, and he knew that he himself had not been the victim of this delusion. And while he was deciding that he would accede to the young man's request, he was aware that he was not doing it for the girl but for the young man. To think of that youth going into Puerto Balboa in his raincoat and hat made him less lonely. He and Jack had been together against the world, and now he was alone. Some obscure unrecognized instinct made him feel the powerful quality in this young man's presence, a quality which attracted him, as though he also possessed Jack's antagonism toward the world of authority. There was something else too, something magical that Mr. Barker, knowing nothing about himself, could not define or put into any sort of words. It was a secret responsiveness to the fundamental humanity of

the world, to the masculine strength which was the source of all movement and accomplishment and pleasure. Women only focussed that emotion. They did not create it.

Knowing nothing about himself save that he was a man who had somehow missed everything in the world of any value, Mr. Barker did not express these emotions even to himself. He was merely aware of the fact that this boy with the dark eager face, whose long lashes flickered over baffling eyes of cloudy hazel, whose long black hair was slicked back over his head like a woman's, was seeking his help in an enterprise full of danger. And what attracted Mr. Barker and woke him up, as it were, was that while the young man was aware of the danger and wished to avoid it, he was not afraid. He did not look as if he had ever been afraid of anything in his life. And that was where he was very like Jack. That was why Mr. Barker, perhaps, had loved Jack—he had never been afraid. Even at that last moment, which had almost torn Mr. Barker's inarticulate soul from his body, when Jack had given him that look of profound knowledge, the lad had not been afraid.

He knocked his pipe out against the table. He saw the young man raise his arms and emerge from his poncho. He began to roll a cigarette.

"Tell me about your friend who is dead," he said.

Mr. Barker discovered that it was just what he wanted to do. He wanted to praise Jack; and how could he do that to anybody who had known him? Jack made a bad impression on everybody except himself. He was too quick on the trigger, too touchy, too foul in his language to get a good word from man or woman. He had never been able to work with any other chief. Mr. Barker wanted to express aloud how he felt about Jack, and he had a horror of talking to himself. He regarded it as a symptom of madness. But when he began to talk he went on talking as though he were alone, staring at the river in the distance with a rapt, bitter expression on his face. And the young man listened as though he were an invisible guardian angel, asking no questions, making no interruptions. He sat on the table with the grace and lightness of a faun, for all his long boots and the heavy blue revolver bulging under his tunic. To his agile, revolutionary, yet aristocratic mentality there was something grotesque in this fattish middle-aged man with the huge moustache telling how he and his mate had knocked about the world together, always quarrelling with their employers and with each

other, always trying to "better themselves," but with disastrous results. He heard how they had once, after the war in South Africa, "started a little business—repair shop in London," and lost every penny. Through it all ran a strain of sentiment for Jack, who had to be got out of trouble of all kinds. To the young man's logical mind the death of Jack was a fortunate solution. Mr. Barker went on to tell how "that girl in Havana got hold of Jack and nobody could do anything with him. Mad about her, he was, for all the time we were there. It was like him to lose his mind over a girl like her. I never saw a respectable girl who could stand Jack. There was something about the way he looked at them that scared 'em. He had no sense about women."

In a way he had forgotten his audience. He ran on and on, reviewing their lives together, unveiling an odyssey of folly and failure. There was an undercurrent of bitter disillusionment, as though the sombre rain-soaked landscape had its counterpart in his mind, when he told how they resolved to get away from the ship.

"It's always the way with a seagoing man—if he quits he's done for, and if he stays at sea he's done for anyhow. You can't get away from it once you're started. But Jack was not to be held. He never got on with that skipper, and neither did I. Jobs aren't easy found at home. Thought we'd start out here at good money. And we got a job at good money—twenty pound a month to start. And now this! Well, that's how it goes. I ought to have sense enough to dry up, but I keep coming back to it. I'll never see him again. I'll never see him again. That's what gets me. Nobody else ever gave a damn for Jack. And nobody else ever gave a damn for me. And what do you care?"

He fell silent as the world seemed to dissolve into a chaos of vapour and darkness. Inside the pulqueria a tiny light flickered and a faint querulous cry arose from a naked baby lying on a bed in the corner. The young man twisted his body round and sank down beside his companion. He patted Mr. Barker's arm.

"Why do you say that?" he asked. "Men die every day, every hour, every minute, all over the world. We have to go on living. Listen! You hear that baby cry? Farther up the road there is an old woman who was dying this morning. Now I expect she is dead. This morning many soldiers were alive, eating their frijoles. Now they are lying in the forest and the

buzzards are sitting on their backs. Have you ever seen a buzzard begin on a dead man? The buzzard, you see, is alive. The next minute I have shot him, his neck bends over, he tumbles down beside the dead soldier. Well, if you go that way in a month you will see two skeletons, so clean you can pick them up and take them with you. No difference between them. Perhaps that baby you hear cry will pick up a tarantula next week and he will cry no more. He will swell up and go black, and the mother will yell for three days. Then she will have another one and another. Life and ideas only are important. You and me—your friend and my friend—what does it matter? When we go, others come. You think that is cruel? Well, it is not my fault. It is the truth. But, of course, we fight as long as we are alive. That is natural too."

He gave a laugh that showed his large strong teeth and expressed the full vitality of his body. Mr. Barker could sense the familiar thrill of it. Jack had been like that. When you were with him and there were no women about, something flowed out from him. It was like an invisible glow. In the dusk Mr. Barker thought of Jack again. He grasped the table and stood up to take off his raincoat. He was going to say something—he never remembered what it was—when the young man grasped his arm with a powerful hand and gave a low warning hiss. Someone was coming down the track among the trees. Like a cat the young man climbed through the opening, dragged at Mr. Barker and got him through, and swung the wooden shutters together. The padrone had already closed the door and put out the candle.

Listening at the chinks of the shutter they could hear the sound of men and animals breathing heavily and hurriedly. They saw vague shapes of men on mules, with other men holding to the saddles and being dragged along in a sort of desperate exhaustion. Faint moans came to them too, as wounded men in couples and threes, supporting each other, shuffled through the liquid mud of the road. Men without apparent hurts came on singly, running at times and looking behind them. Horses, with men lying like bundles athwart the saddles, were led by other men, who never lifted their heads.

Mr. Barker, as he peered through at this procession, was aware of the young man's quick breathing and excited whispers. There was even a faint chuckle from him as a straggler reeled

toward the house and stretched himself out with a supplication to the Saviour.

"San Paulistas!" the young man whispered. "Soldiers of the great Martinez! His army is cut off."

"What does this one want?" asked Mr. Barker. The man who had laid himself down on the porch was uttering moans interspersed with sudden convulsive shouts. The young man showed his teeth but he did not smile.

"He wants a priest," he whispered. "A peon. Running has torn his wound. I expect he will die. You remember what I said about the buzzard, those great birds with naked pink necks and bald heads?"

"Don't!" said Mr. Barker. "Why don't some of those men try to get in here?"

"Because they have only one idea in their heads—to get into Puerto Balboa. They have been running for about eight miles, probably. I expect El Chico, the bandit, has ambushed them while our general is attacking Martinez. You don't know El Chico, the bandit of Las Esmeraldas? We have promised him a government position. He is a dwarf, and looks like a brown monkey dressed in a green uniform. They say, although he is only about one meter high, he is nearly fifty years old. He calls himself a prince, Prince Panzi of some place in Austria. He was in a troup of little people in Mexico and he disappeared, so they say. The people in this country call him El Chico, the little one. He sits on a big mule and it makes him seem smaller. He smokes enormous cigars and wears a big diamond ring on his finger. When he shoots his prisoners he has a camera and takes snapshots of the executions. And he has a trick of showing the collection to the prisoners first in a magic lantern. The power he has over the Indian people is extraordinary. They think he is supernatural. He is much more powerful in Las Esmeraldas than the president."

"And he's here?" said Mr. Barker, feeling a little strange at the pit of his stomach.

"No. He would not come in so close without support. There is Von Stücke, another German, who is a hard nut. He will probably hold the lake a long while. He is a professional soldier. But there is no doubt those men are very much frightened. More frightened than hurt, as you English say. Yes, some are wounded, and this one outside is going to kick the bucket. English is a language full of difficult phrases. I think they are

all gone now. We can follow them. And the rain has stopped a little. We will go down toward the beach and come in by the New Bristol House. You know it, I expect. A *mozo* told me this morning that the New Workers Union will have a procession to-night, through the town. The idea is to embarrass the Company. That, in short, is our object." And he opened the shutter.

"Whose object?" asked Mr. Barker, glancing at the man lying across the steps.

"Of the revolution. To destroy the Company. Or the Company will destroy Costaragua. I speak frankly because of your feelings about Colonel Martinez. And also you owe me something."

He stepped through the door, which he had opened, and looked up and down the track.

"All gone," he said. "No, we need not exchange coats."

"Owe you something? What do you mean?"

"Why," said the young man, putting his head through the hole in his poncho. "Your life. When you came up and sat down here I was on the point of driving a knife into your back. I thought I was ambushed. Those shoes of yours made no sound. And then, you know, I saved your life again. You were in the mood to destroy yourself. You had nothing left to live for. I know how a man looks when he thinks of ending himself. You were on the very edge of it!" he exclaimed in a low thrilling tone. "But now you have interest in life again. The buzzards will not get you yet, eh?"

And once again Mr. Barker, as he set forward in the dripping darkness, was aware of that invisible glow.

CHAPTER XIII

JAMES, who had the faculty of waking when he wished, opened his eyes, and fixing them upon the high cornice of their chamber, listened to the hurried, nervous tick of the old alarm clock he had brought ashore from his cabin. It stood near him on a chair, and without looking at it, he reached over and put the alarm out of commission. There would be no need of it now. It was, he judged, daylight in a vague, inconclusive way outside, and the clock said five minutes of six. He lay with his hands under his head, his body covered by the thin sheet and the white semi-transparent mosquito bar hung from a nail in the ceiling. Beyond he could see the dim reticulations of light through the louvers of the window shutters at each end of the room. It was the best room in the Pension Francia, occupying the whole depth of the wing and giving upon the front and rear galleries. Between the two beds was an enormous dressing table with a slab of coloured marble that looked almost edible in its rich mottling. The mirror was extravagantly framed and carried bows of yellow plush on its corners. Against the wall, near the monstrous washstand of black marble, was a thin hard sofa with pink silk upholstery and tarnished gold legs. Under it were hassocks on which were painted fabulous pug dogs. In a corner was a wardrobe of French design, the dark ornate doors ajar and showing silk and muslin garments hanging on the hooks. Some of these strange things came from the Canal Zone, some Señora Munn had bought when consuls went home. They were all covered with a fine white dust that was eating into their structure and disintegrating their fabrics. The room had the appearance of a warehouse of second-hand rubbish hastily arranged for the reception of uncritical refugees. He moved his head, raised himself slightly upon his elbows, and looked around. He saw his own modest and not very handsome gladstone bag. There were two trunks and several leather cases, one of which was unlatched and seemed to foam with lace. On the towel rack hung a pair of long white

stockings. The dressing table carried heavy hand mirrors with tortoise-shell backs, long-bristled hair brushes and silver-backed tortoise-shell combs. It bore on one corner bottles and pots with French names on their labels, and on the other there stood a silver spirit lamp. In his innocence he had been upset by all that gear. . . .

He gazed across at the door nearest him and saw, through the louvers of the panels, the movements of someone sweeping the gallery. He would have to get up. He suddenly understood that he was keeping his eyes away from the other bed. At the back of his mind had been a plan to get up, open the door softly with his clothes on his arm, reach the shower by the passage, and dress in the bathhouse. And then hurry down to the ship. And the consciousness of this evasion had kept his eyes away from the other bed.

He lay down again. It struck him that his impatience to rush down to the ship was not due to anything down there needing him just yet, but a giving way to a sort of slovenly cowardice. He lay down, his hands under his head, staring at the weather-stained engraving in a tarnished gold frame, entitled *Vertige,* which was Señora Munn's conception of aesthetic daring. A woman in a ball dress, her arms in long white gloves, was leaning back over a sofa and kissing a man with gleaming black hair and a noble forehead. James looked at it without coming to any opinion concerning it. He was occupied with his own situation, which was that of a man who had got himself into a crisis without possessing any experience that would help him to get out of it. Already he rejected his plan to steal away to the ship. That would be no solution.

All he had done had been to remain silent when she accused him the night before. It was his character to do that, and she was unable to understand it. She had suddenly revealed an unimagined ferocity when he did not answer. But that had not been his real error, he saw now. Just as suddenly she had dropped on her bed and began to sob; and he had gone on lying perfectly still, as though the words she had flung at him had paralyzed his body, as well as his mind. He had wanted to rush over to her and pull her to him, to search the extraordinary beauty of her face, the face he could never forget as long as he lived, now! But he remembered that he had been unable to stir. He lay there with a horrible pain at his heart, until the weariness of his body had triumphed, and he had slept.

A horrible pain, because he had been shown without any warning that his resolution to carry out his vow to her was not sufficient. Or rather he understood that she felt no obligation to him for it. Later on, perhaps, he would discover that no woman ever felt gratitude for a man's sacrifice of anything. And he was also aware that she had penetrated, in that moment, to his secret heart. She had detected the truth. She had kept up the pretense to herself that he felt for her as she had felt for him; and then, in that silent immobility of his in answer to her cry of awakening, she had read the answer to her fear.

And behind all this he felt that he had been trapped. The fundamental egotism which lies far down in every man's relations with a woman, which makes him set a value upon his own individuality, as though it were a unique treasure coveted by queens, was stirring in James Wishart as he lay on his flat, hard bed beneath the folds of the mosquito bar. He was a prisoner, in bondage to what he conceived his duty. The notion of evading that duty did not occur to him. The very fact that they had discovered each other's true emotions, or what they believed were their true emotions, made it all the more incumbent upon him to do what he had vowed under the spell of her voice, her beauty, and the forlorn destiny which had impelled her to trust him. He would have to do that, no matter what was said. That was his dour interpretation of honour.

He knew he ought to get up, but he decided that he must think out where they stood first. It might make a great difference in future, the line he took this morning. He was like a man confronted with an immense disaster to some complex mechanism which could only be repaired with a number of unfamiliar tools. Something had crashed in that moment when Yolanda, no longer a warlike queen but a passionate child, had stood blazing down on him, her clenched hands tearing at the bosom of her chemise, her hair over her shoulders, all her defences gone, all her dignity abandoned in that moment of supreme suffering. He seemed himself to be approaching the wreckage, with the intention of salvaging it, but aware that a false move would simply complete the destruction. And he had an acutely personal interest in avoiding such an event. He was secretly appalled at the true nature of a man's relations with a woman. All his life he had been among them, watching them make love and marry. He had assumed, without giving the matter profound thought, that when the time came he would certainly be equal to the demands

so easily filled by the men around him. The fact that Maria Chisola had made a fool of him, had taken his money and cleared out, had no bearing on this new discovery that two days and nights with Yolanda had resulted in giving him an experience of heaven, of purgatory, and of hell.

He lay perfectly still, getting control over himself, while these thoughts flashed through his mind so instantaneously that they were indeed outside of time. One of the most valuable of his faculties at sea had been his control. He did not get excited, but was able to do the right thing at once, when something happened down below. He was bringing that faculty to bear now. He had a conviction that he was not to be held responsible because she had misunderstood his silence. He knew they could not continue to have scenes like that. He felt his body shudder slightly as he remembered it. It had been awful. It had come so suddenly, he had remained silent and still, as some animals feign death in the presence of mortal peril. He had felt that if he so much as looked at her, or spoke a syllable, she would have done some desperate thing. He had to force himself now to remember how it had arisen. He looked into his mind and saw a series of pictures, one dissolving into the next with dizzy speed. He saw the two of them at dinner at Señora Munn's table. James did not like Señora Munn. He did not like her black eyes and black ringlets, or the chignon. Much less did he like the effort of Señora Munn to treat him as if he were some sort of upper domestic allowed to eat with the family. Señora Munn directed all her remarks to Yolanda, in Spanish. She even ordered the servant to wait on him in that language. He had expected Yolanda to resent Señora Munn's attitude, and when she did not refer to it, decided that it was trivial.

He saw them leave the dining room, followed by the eyes of the young men from the railway, and sit in the reception room. The rain came in sudden torrential downpours, thinning to a misty drizzle. They had sat on the stiff horsehair sofa with the curly back which was pushed under the wall bookcase full of roach-eaten novels of the 'nineties. In three and two volumes. He had knocked his head against it in rising and had brought down volume two of a novel called *Thou Art the Man.* He had shown it to Yolanda. They sat there smoking cigarettes while various people looked in and withdrew. She had put her hand to his forehead and stroked his hair, drawing close to him. She had been, at that moment, absorbed in him. He had been tired

and checked several yawns, turning them into laughter as he saw the quick, impetuous chagrin in her face. She had no conception at all of the work he put in during the day. And her expression had been puzzling when he said he would have to go on board again soon, for an hour or so. The ship was due to sail for Rio Taga the next day.

That had been one picture, dissolving into the next imperceptibly. He had had his head turned toward her. Beyond her bare shoulder was the bay window which projected into the gallery outside, so that anyone standing on the balustrade could rest his hands on the window and look in. And James, listening to the murmur of Yolanda's voice, saw someone looking in.

The curious thing about it now, as he lay on his bed, was that that dark young face looking down at them with an intent intelligent smile, as though it were aware of the precarious and perilous nature of their relationship, had seemed to James the very embodiment of the ghostly fear deep in his heart. He had seemed to have solidified for a single moment out of the air, like a spirit. He was like a projection of the ideal lover James imagined would be equal to his own present situation, the lover who would be gay and powerful and resourceful, who would know how to deal with Señora Munn, who could circumvent the ceaseless limitations of his own life on the ship, and who would be able to cope with the coming scene with Don Orlando when the *Santa Brigida* came in. James knew that this imaginary and dominating substitute would have no fear of Yolanda or of the future. He would be cool and confident, able to understand every glance of those strange, beautiful eyes, every modulation of her voice. And something of the apprehension in his heart thus suddenly focussed and illuminated in that dark, smiling young face outside must have become visible to her. Her eyes darkened and she glanced over her shoulder, but the face was gone.

"*Querido,* you do not listen to me when I speak," she said, turning to him again. "What is the matter? Why do you not speak? Is it the custom in your country, when people are married, that they do not speak any more? You yawn, you look out of the window, though it is dark and there is nothing to be seen."

"Yes, there was a man looking in," he said.

"A man? What kind of man? Tell me. A man!" She repeated sharply. Her voice had risen.

"A young chap." He had been going to say "native" and checked himself. "A Costaraguan," he added. "Very handsome, I'd say."

"Handsome?" She made a circular motion of her finger in front of her own face and James, who had become familiar with her gestures, nodded. She looked grave, and making a sign for him to sit still she rose and walked out of the room.

He looked after her. Her body and limbs possessed that perfection of balance and form which men have always assigned to their ideal women without regretting its absence in the women they love. In Yolanda it seemed merely to heighten her sensuous beauty. For James it had been one of the most difficult of the problems which he felt that imaginary lover could handle with smiling ease. There was a vein of delicacy in James, apart from his youth, which made perfect beauty sacred. And when he looked after her and saw the young men who lounged in the hallway and gallery behind the Pension turn to look at her, he pondered on what he had done in the exaltation of his spirit and the lure of that beauty.

He remembered then how every situation in which he was finding himself called for talents which he did not possess. Once, as they walked among the tables to their own places, while a buzz of conversation rose about the room—conversation concerning the military situation on the lake, where Von Stücke was holding the insurrectos—he had seen smiles on the faces of the young men his own age. They had abandoned the fascinating problem of arguing what Martinez was doing in the mountains east of San Paulo to contemplate the lucky young man of their own race who had been suddenly married to Señorita de Mara, who was, they mentioned to recent arrivals, supposed to be protected by Don Orlando, the vice-chairman of Striker-Perkins, if you please. They had stories, these young men, which explained everything. She had got into trouble, and this rather good-looking young sprig had been persuaded to take on a peck of trouble. James had been able to read what they thought of him in their light, irresponsible smiles. They were the sort of men who always went home and got married to one of their own class. They stood at the door of Señora Munn's office and tried to make that lady say something. But Señora Munn was not to be drawn. She had not yet recovered from the visitation of General Martinez. If James had known it, Señora Munn did not speak to him because she was afraid

of him. She suspected him of influence and powers he did not possess. He found that out later.

But it seemed to him that he should not have allowed Yolanda to pin him on that sofa with a single gesture. He should have leaped to the window and seized the dark, smiling young man. That was one of his difficulties with Yolanda. She took charge, and he was already permitting it because he knew nothing of what to do here. He found in her a paralyzing complexity of character. She would command him imperiously and suddenly she would caress him with an air of adoration. She seemed to be in a state of intermittent bewilderment about him and about herself. She would gaze at him with painful intensity as though he had changed into someone else since they arrived in Puerto Balboa.

And that was a fact, he had reflected, as he sat on the horsehair sofa among Señora Munn's intensely Victorian furniture. He was gazing at an engraving of Queen Victoria at Balmoral, wearing a tartan skirt and a glengarry bonnet, when a tall young man, very blond and sunburned, strolled in with his hands in his pockets. One of the railway crowd, James knew, and he gazed at his visitor with a certain wistfulness. They had left him alone so far, thinking no doubt that such was his desire. He wondered what this chap would say. He had not long to wait. The chap asked him if he would come down to the bar and have a drink.

"I noticed your wife was engaged," he added with a great intake of breath and a bright smile.

"Engaged?" said James, standing up.

"Thought you knew," said the other. "It's not raining just now and I saw her along the path taking the air with some fellow from the town."

"Yes?" said James. He added that he would take a drink. "But not in the bar."

"Come to my room, then," said his new friend.

They climbed to the third story; he remembered their footsteps booming on the wooden galleries; and he saw the *Candleshoe* at anchor, her riding light hung like a jewel against the loom of Strikers' Cay. He stopped at the doorway and looked into the room where his host was switching on the light beside a straight flat bed whose mosquito bar was hauled up out of the way by an arrangement of pulleys. It was the room of a mechanical anchorite. A theodolite in a case leaned

against the wall. Heavy leather baggage with many old labels stood around. There were walking sticks, golf sticks, and a pair of foils, a set of developers, and three tennis rackets. There was a cricket bag. And on the dressing table one of those large silver-framed photos of a girl looking over her shoulder, a girl in evening dress with a wrap thrown back to show a pure throat and plucky chin, which Englishmen take with them to the ends of the earth.

The boy, who had been given the order, followed them in almost at once. James shook his head at the offer of soda water. He drank seldom. Now he wanted the full vitalizing power of the whisky. He set the empty glass down slowly.

How had they got round to the subject of himself? He remembered something was said about the railway, and then the *Candleshoe*. Yes, and then the consul was mentioned. The consul had been asked to introduce James, and he had declined.

"Why?" asked James, looking at the large photograph.

"Thought you'd prefer not," said the other man, holding his glass near his lips. "You're Scotch, aren't you?" James nodded. "So am I, though I don't speak it, you know. My people live in London. Name's Barr. You know, I was sorry Mr. Leake didn't see his way . . . you don't mind, I hope?"

"No, I'm glad," said James. "But why did you wish for the introduction?"

James remembered the answer now, because it had led up to the crisis when he went to their room and found Yolanda. That was after he had gone down to the ship.

"You see," said Mr. Barr, "we knew absolutely you hadn't any idea of what you'd done, what you were in for. Don Orlando is the biggest political power in this country, and he's simply ruthless when anyone gets in his way. I don't mean in a metaphorical sense, either," he went on. "I mean ruthless in a literal sense. When we heard what had happened we were flabbergasted!"

They had sat for a moment while James adjusted his mind to this. The flabbergasted Britishers would have been astonished had they known how trivial their anxieties seemed. It was not what might happen to him if he blundered beneath the chariot wheels of Don Orlando: it was what had already happened to him, to his soul, deep inside him. But he could not tell anybody of this. It was a problem he had to work out for himself. As he sat there, and Mr. Barr gave him a sort of

sympathetic inspection, James was thinking of Yolanda's sudden departure. He said, hesitating over the words:

"That's all right. But I must leave you, I'm afraid. My—my wife—you said she was talking . . ."

"To a chap from the town. Yes. I saw her myself. I say, it isn't possible you don't know what's in the wind? Because you ought to, you know. I may as well tell you we discussed your affairs last night, and the other fellows decided to take a chance and—well, tip you off. We took the liberty. In fact, the consul, you know, approves."

"Of the liberty?" said James.

"That's it. Of the liberty. You see—— Better have another drink because this is rather important," he said, holding his finger against a circular button on the wall. He leaned forward, his arms on his knees, as though about to divulge a weighty secret. "You see," he repeated, "we can't help regarding you as a sort of sacrificial lamb, if you know what I mean. For us."

It was as though the last two words, striking the clear, candid gaze of the young man listening to them, sank like stones into his heart. He pursed his lips, drew on the cigarette, looked with wistful gravity at the large photograph, and then allowed his glance to flutter round the room as though trying to escape.

"How could that be?" he asked in simple wonder. "You never saw me before."

"No, but we've all known the Señorita Yolanda, you see, and that's the main thing," Mr. Barr said, clasping his hands over one knee. "Don't misunderstand me, old chap. Personally——" he nodded toward the photograph—"that's my hostage to fortune, and I'm glad I've given it. I haven't seen my son and heir yet. Born six months after I arrived here. No, it's the young chaps who go up to the dances at the A. B. C. Club and the Club Commercial at San Paulo who have been smitten. Very much so. You see, she has never made any secret of her intention to marry an Englishman. And that, with her situation—her background, you may say—made a pretty kettle of fish. I needn't tell you that she is rather—er—striking. Some of our young bloods made idiots of themselves over her. But that was in times of peace. And here you come, when we may have fighting right in the town any day now, with the political situation very mixed up indeed, jumping right into the middle of the fire and starting no end of talk."

He fixed James with his pleasant blue eyes and added, "For

we hadn't a chance to warn you what you were letting yourself in for."

James saw him lean forward and move a dark leather frame a little so that he could gaze at it. The picture was that of a woman, the same woman, with her arm round a little boy whose fair, fluffy curls were pressed to her bosom. James felt his eyes blurring as he looked at it. The other man's gesture took on a deep significance. He ran his tongue over his upper lip and winked a little.

"Well," he said, looking down at the cigarette, "it's done now. And it is not so bad as you seem to think. We have no intention of remaining here. We are going up on the ship to New York."

"Then I'm afraid you don't grasp quite what I was driving at," said the other man. "Going to New York won't make any difference, even if you managed it before Don Orlando arrives."

"And you think I cannot take care of myself?" said James with a movement of his body as though rousing from a prolonged abstraction. "You think I have been led into a false position?"

"Not think, know," said the other man quietly. "You see, the fact of your being here shows it. Now, don't go off at half cock, old chap," he went on as James glanced up. "Please don't go off at half cock. You aren't the first, you know. . . . Of course, you are the first who's got into this fix, but there have been half a dozen of our young chaps we've dragged out from under the wheels, so to speak. Romantic young beggars!"

"Romantic? You think I'm romantic?"

"Not the least doubt of it. And it's always the way." His eyes rested upon the mysterious phantasy of the night, the lights trembling in the vaporous atmosphere, the sullen boom of the distant surf, the slow spread and contraction of the reflections on the ocean swell. His eyes rested upon it with a sort of good-humoured sophistication as though he were aware of this subtle poison that enters white men's blood in the tropics but was now inoculated himself with some antitoxin.

"Nearly everybody is the same, when they come here," he said, without taking his eyes from the scene framed in the screened doorway. The meshes of the screen gave that scene a vibrating quality, as if it were being reproduced, as though it were flat and artificial, like a motion picture seen through dark cloth.

James heard him telling how nearly everybody was the same.

His conception of the men on the railway and in the mines as a homogeneous army, working year after year, changed to one of endless replacements. He saw them suddenly as men like himself, pushing vaguely through life, instead of smoothly moving cogs in the gears of an immense and powerful machine. He saw them as beings incessantly beset by fear and doubt and overwhelmed by the blind engulfing waves of passion. "Dragged out from under the wheel," this man had said. They were such romantic young beggars. . . .

But as he sat there, looking thoughtful yet alert, he had discovered that all these fine, vivid metaphors did not describe his own situation. He had discovered that a man's relations with a woman elude classification. There is always something incommunicable about them. And it was plain that Mr. Barr had no inkling of the real situation. Mr. Barr was preoccupied with the perils involved in marrying suddenly Yolanda de Mara, the girl whom everybody knew was living under the significant protection of Don Orlando, a powerful and sinister political personality. To James all this was like the sound of distant gunfire. To him the real problem was that he had, under the stress of emotional excitement, married a girl to whom he was spiritually a stranger. Nor was it her fault, he thought. How could he explain to anybody on earth that she was one of those women who are paralyzed by the reality of passion? How could he ever divulge the spectre in his heart? It seemed incredible, even to him, that she, who had been the aggressor and who, even now, could dominate their secular relations because she was so familiar with everything going on, seemed unable to understand or to achieve that subtle blend of tenderness and ruthless slaking of desire which is love. To him, pondering these perplexities, and seeing yet others hovering behind, the solicitude of Mr. Barr and his friends was not profoundly important. It led him to smile a little. Mr. Barr noticed it and paused.

"I see what you mean," said James. He added reflectively. "A peck of trouble."

"All that," agreed Mr. Barr, "though you seem to think I am making an unnecessary fuss about it."

"But what would you suggest that I do?" James asked. "Run away?"

Mr. Barr, looking out at the dark glitter of the harbour, nodded slightly.

"Yes," he said. "Best thing in the long run. Nothing could happen to you on board your ship, for instance."

"Yes. And——" James allowed his own gaze to dwell upon that luminous-obscure panel before he glanced at Mr. Barr—"would you leave your wife like that?"

"That's rather a funny question when I've not seen her for several years," said Mr. Barr. "But the cases aren't the same, old chap."

For a moment James, looking at this man, gave him credit for having discovered his secret. But Mr. Barr was looking through the doorway. He was absorbed in a momentary contemplation of his marvellous luck as the exiled husband of the blonde girl in the picture. He was, for the moment, no more than a symbol of his race.

"Not quite the same," he repeated as though to himself. "Nothing will happen to her either, you know, if you are out of the way. I know how the Costaraguan men think of their women."

"You mean they wouldn't—he wouldn't blame her or do anything?"

"No more than to a horse if you'd stolen it, and used it, and he got it back. Property."

James suddenly had an enormous contempt for Costaraguan men. Whatever a woman might be, she wasn't property. He knew his own people were matter-of-fact in many ways toward their women, but there was always a sense of partnership and equality behind that. And his problem was not to be solved by running away.

"No," he said, "I'm afraid that's not to be thought of. It wouldn't be easy for me to do, as it happens, and so I'd better be stepping. I've to go down to the ship before—before I turn in."

"Then you're going to stick it?" said Mr. Barr. "You don't think I'm just warning you to scare you, do you? Because you'll jolly soon find out I'm not when the *Santa Brigida* docks in the morning."

"Oh, no," said James, standing up. He reflected that whether the *Santa Brigida* docked or not, he was in a crisis of his life. "Not that."

"I shan't be here," said Mr. Barr. He glanced at the heavy leather bundles against the wall. "I'm going up the line on a hand car." He did not mention that the hand car had sides of

steel plate. "You know they are firing on the river launches coming down from Cordoba? A passenger was killed to-day. But the guns your ship brought will be on the job to-morrow. They're needed. Martinez seems to have made a mizzle of it. If it wasn't for that old German beer drinker, Von Stücke, we'd have them firing into the town. You'd have to pull out. Why not look at it that way? It may come."

James shook his head very slightly, but it convinced the other man. Mr. Barr said:

"It complicates things for us as well as for you. Don Orlando is our vice-chairman, deputy administrador, you know. It's all right for Leake—he's not in the Company; he has his consular immunity. I suppose you know the insurrectos are really fighting the Company."

"I heard that."

"They say our boss controls the elections. He doesn't. Nobody can do that. It doesn't matter either. Nobody can stay in office without the soldiers." He looked up at the young man. "Martinez, the Minister of War, will be the next president. A good man. But he doesn't like Don Orlando. And our boss, Striker, you know, will have his work before him to keep the peace. But he will. He's a wonderful man, young Wishart, our boss. He'll be here to-morrow morning. I sha'n't see him. I shall be on a spur up the line waiting for his car to pass. Wonderful man. Once we get the line as far as Cordoba, he will have Costaragua in his pocket. That's why this business is so important. We've got to have a showdown, or these insurrections will be starting every three months. Got to show 'em we mean business."

James stood facing the doorway. Behind this monologue he sensed the driving spirit that was splitting the country like a wedge, the mysterious urge of his own race to carry railways up mountains, to harness waterfalls and drive tunnels through the ranges. It was only the youngsters who were romantic, who saw not the vision, and who fell victims to the seduction of the native women. As he himself had done. He was wondering whether there was some hidden flaw in his character which laid him open to women like Maria Chisola and Yolanda de Mara. But his soul cried out at once against this. He stood stock still. What he had known was love, surely.

"You're going down to the ship? Why not, when you come back, ask her what she thinks?"

James turned round.

"You mean suggest to her I leave her and clear out?"

"No, not exactly. But if you were both out of the way when Don Orlando arrives it would simplify matters."

"She would not do that."

"How do you know? She's aware of the risk she runs, I can tell you that."

"How do you know?" asked James.

Mr. Barr blew his breath through pursed lips.

"There are things one knows officially," he remarked quietly, "and other things one knows unofficially. This is unofficial. She was talking just now with a young Costaraguan I've seen her dance with often in San Paulo. He has slipped into the town and is probably slipping out again. That was why she went away just now. He's here unofficially. Did he send a message?"

"He looked in the window," said James.

"Well, there's an example of what you've let yourself in for, even if you hadn't this business of Don Orlando. You aren't the first man to marry a Costaraguan. You have to be clever to keep up your end. Half the time you don't know what they're thinking, or doing, for that matter. It's only natural; they understand their own countrymen. There's the language. We talk with our tongues. They talk with tongues, yes, but more with eyes and hands. He looked in the window! And she went right out to him. They'll confabulate for a minute or two and between them they'll have more information about what's going on here than you'll learn in fifty years. And they never tell us any of it. Live with them for years and you can't calculate what they'll do to-morrow."

James had turned once again to the doorway. He knew that all this was true enough. It was an objective view of what he was feeling in his heart. While he had been in Mr. Barr's room he had been aware of that feeling, like lead in his breast, of being forever outside Yolanda's private thoughts—the thoughts she would have when the storms of politics and of love had died down and they were voyaging through the calm seas of daily life. Not because she would not try, but because of fundamental discrepancies in their characters. She would not know what he wanted. As she sat beside him and scanned his face she did not understand that he must be admitted to those private thoughts if they were to continue. In her eyes was a barrier

behind which she lived. Suppose he himself, after an absence, looked in at the window and smiled like that young man? He did not know if she would come to him or not. Beyond her beauty and the sharp agony of the passion she had revealed on the ship, he knew nothing. He felt as though he were afloat in a stormy sea and that she were hanging around his neck. She was taking him down, yet, as he gazed into her eyes, he saw a stranger. He understood that to keep afloat he had to depend on himself. He heard the other man say, at the end of a sentence of vague sympathy, "I don't blame you, of course. I dare say it's what I'd do myself. But it never works down here."

He did not speak again. It was as though the inspiration to be derived from that picture of the blonde Englishwoman and her little boy had been exhausted. Now the young man passing out upon the high gallery was leaving the protective presence of the picture. He would have to look out for himself. Everybody had to do that.

James, lying perfectly still on his bed, while these memories flashed instantaneously through his mind, saw himself entering their room to get his cap and finding her lying on her bed, face downward under the netting. He had been stopped in his tracks at that sight. At first he had thought she was dead, and the smiling face of the young man at the window had appeared, terribly enlarged, in his mind. And with that brief sudden fear he had a feeling that his own life, or rather his own youth, had come to an end, and that he was being carried away to another sphere of existence. Then she moved, and he saw her body breathing, and from among the tumbled braids of hair an eye showed for a moment.

The sight of that eye kept him from going to her. It gave him again that feeling that she was a stranger in spite of her sudden accesses of demonstrative passion, in spite of her desperate need of him to escape from the thralldom that had darkened her spirit. How desperate it was had been made plain by Mr. Barr's hints. She had tried often enough. The eye he had glimpsed had been the bright scheming eye of a woman aware of the fundamental prerogative of all women, to use men for their own ends. And suddenly she had risen on her elbow and flung out her arm.

The sensuous beauty of that gesture contrasted sharply with the expression on her face. Her hair, very much out of order, hung over her brows. Her dress had slid from her white shoul-

der. Yolanda looked at him as he had never seen her look before. He said:

"What is it?"

She gave him a glance of weariness and uncertainty.

"Where have you been?" he asked in a low tone. "Who was that?"

"It was—it was—" she looked at the hard yellow matting under his big black boots, which he wore when on duty—"it was that young man I told you was at Rio Taga. He came to see me. He is in great danger."

"Why did he come to see you, Yolanda?"

He stood away from her as though she were surrounded by some invisible barrier.

"Because—oh, because he knows I have made a terrible mistake. I thought . . ."

She flung a brief glance at his face again. She could not tell him what she thought. She could not explain that she had imagined him, as soon as they were married, sweeping all before him, doing marvellous deeds, deeds of incredible dexterity, making a name for himself over all those men she had known in San Paulo and San Benito. Unconsciously she had endowed him with the qualities of men like Don Orlando, whose father was English, and Don Francisco, who was all English. She had never seen an Englishman who was not clever and powerful in her own country, and she was unable to imagine any of that race otherwise. And the slow, competent precision of James had inspired her with the conviction that he was like that. She had endured two days of extraordinary tension, alternating between a frenzied passion and a cold terror at the approach of the *Santa Brigida*. When she had spoken of this indirectly, he had revealed no understanding of her need that he reassure her of his love, his courage, and his resource. He had said nothing, having the work of the ship on his mind.

She let her head descend to the pillow again. She saw again that lithe, active figure of the young man Don Carlos Almanzor, his eyes brilliant as gems in the darkness, large with the consciousness of danger and looking narrowly toward the town for its approach. The dull roar of the surf could be heard as he spoke rapidly to her. He spoke of the destiny of the republic, of the defeat of Martinez in the swamps of the Tortuga River, of the blockading of the river above San Paulo, of the ultimate

victory of the Conservatives at San Benito. The Liberals would never dare, he said, to bring in foreign assistance. As for Don Orlando, and he folded his arms theatrically, that was his own mission. He had come into the town through the lower part, through the black ooze of the marshy lands behind the beach. He had been in a posada down there among the workmen, all roaring drunk. They had taken his revolver and belt. He had not dared to resist. He had smiled as though it was a joke. But he was now unarmed and must get a weapon somehow.

She remembered his startled stare as she had told him she would get one at once. It had almost shaken him out of his ridiculous yet adorable Liberator pose. He would pull his face down to simulate the haggardness of Bolívar. She had come in and secured the revolver Captain Millerton had given her, dropping it into the closed umbrella. She had experienced a miraculous exaltation during this performance. She felt the whole of her European civilization falling away from her. She saw herself as a sacrificial maiden immolated before that dark young god. He had not even asked her where she had got it, had merely broken it and glanced at the filled chambers before sliding it into his belt. And when he was gone, like a wraith in the heavy night air, she had returned to her room and had fallen in a stupor of uncertainty. For a short time she had forgotten utterly the externals of her life; and James, when he stood suddenly before her in his heavy way, as though he had discovered what she had been doing and was awaiting her confession, struck her with a mingled bewilderment and suspicion, for she could not fathom how much he might know. His very silence augmented her antagonism to her late mood of timid conciliation. She felt by an aboriginal instinct that it was not for her to be making explanations now; it was his rôle to kill or depart. She suddenly realized that the springs of his actions were invisible to her. He said:

"I must go down to the ship."

She turned on him so quickly the netting tore, and he started at the hissing sound of it.

"Yes, you must go to the ship! All the time it is the ship! The ship! You love the ship, I think! Me, I do not count with you! Go to the ship; go, go!"

It was here that he missed his footing, as he phrased it to himself afterward. He remained for a moment motionless, and

then obeyed her. The ship did come first. He discovered that to be so much a part of him nothing would ever change it. By that conception of duty he was cut off from the adventurers of the world. The desertion of it would have made him no more than a pilgrim of adversity. He left Yolanda, and he heard her swift rising, and the hurried click of her shoes on the matting, and the passionate slam of the door. It was the end of a chapter.

And he remembered now, passing timelessly through it all again, the second mate's face over the rail as he came up the side. He remembered it because suddenly Mr. Harris, who had been ashore, at the New Bristol House, began to talk. In the light of the gangway lantern his red, sunburned, concave face seemed preposterously truculent, like a mask that had warped with the heat; as though Mr. Harris, in his eagerness to discover for himself the sources of happiness, had ventured too near the central fires.

He began to talk. It was his method of escaping from himself, from the desperate challenge life constantly held out to him. The sibilant huskiness of his voice followed James along the deck. Mr. Harris belonged to the *hoi polloi*. He was one of Demos. He had forgotten Mr. Barker and had accepted the sudden elevation of his shipmate James Wishart. He was like his innumerable companions in the ocean of existence, transparent and formless. He became accustomed to everything instantaneously. He bore no enduring malice, for his memory held no permanent images. Even love, for Mr. Harris, was a sort of hurried and undignified escapade, an episode of which he was neither ashamed nor intelligently conscious. He was full now of what he had seen ashore, although it had been merely incidental to one of his hasty assignations among those dark hovels behind the church where naphtha flares and pink-shaded candles showed roulette wheels and coloured racehorses surrounded by silent, dark-faced groups. He had returned, truculent but a little frightened, to the New Bristol House, and there had walked right into the thick of a revolution. So he told James. He had to tell it his own way, which was hampered because James did not know the New Bristol House and because James did not help with ejaculations of surprise.

"Into the thick of it, Mister. And do you know who's the leader of it? A bummer! Englishman gone native. Get me? Well, I saw him." Mr. Harris, with James at a standstill by

the engine-room scuttle, tapped himself on the breast. "And I'll tell you another thing, Mister. This steward of ours is in it. There was a shindig at the next table. . . ."

He poured out his tale behind his hand, his breath heavy with the fumes of liquor and tobacco. If he wasn't afraid of being sat on, he'd call the old man. The mate—silly old cuckoo—wouldn't know enough to get out of his own road. A shindig at the next table there was. "Remember that young feller that tried to board us the morning we came in? Didn't see him? Well, he was there. Sitting there drinking this pulque, when a bunch of workmen, all lit up, squeezed in round him. Who is he, eh? Is he for the workmen or the Company? He's a policeman from San Paulo, Policia Secreta! Shoot him! You never heard such a row in your life! He never lost his nerve, just smiled and told 'em he was for them. He'd come from Rio Taga, he said. That's the place, Rio Taga. They were close round him. One of 'em drags out a big black gun this bonny boy has under his coat, and a belt of cartridges. They all shout and start fighting who's to have it. One big chap snatches it, for the general, he says. That's the bummer chap named Pelham. He came in later. Now here's a funny thing. . . . I've got to tell you, Mister. . . ."

Mr. Harris hitched himself closer. He looked along the deck and across to the jetty, where a red light hung like a ruby in the humid night. The canopy of clouds obliterated the very form of the cay close on the outboard flank of the *Candleshoe*. Only the everlasting rumour of the surf outside the haven and the slow uneasy movement of the ship told of a rising sea. Aft along the well deck the scuttles were dark save where a shaded lamp in Captain Millerton's room shed a faint glow on the curtains. Under the awning the soiled white suit of the second mate was a pearl-gray shadow.

"It's this way. When I see those johnnies take that chap's gun, I'm scared. They were ugly, that crowd. They've been on edge for two days now, ever since they broke into the calabozo and took their general out. They were so stewed they'd probably shoot without knowing what they were doing. They think they're goin' to bust everything up. I went through to the back. There's little boxes there with curtains, and the señoritas come and ask you to dance after they bring the drinks. I had a drink and then a dance, and this girl, she's a Peruvian from Lima, she sits down and we have a chin. Then she says she's

got to go and serve some *maquinistas* across the floor. I'm sittin' in this sort of box, see? And all of a sudden I hear voices through the wood."

"You always hear voices," muttered James stirring as though to go below.

"Now, you wait a bit, Mister, because this is not what you think at all. I heard voices. And one of 'em's that dreary steward of ours, Alvarez. Now, then! And when I look through a crack in the boards, the other's that young toff from Rio Taga."

He held his face close to James and waited for this news to sink in.

"And he says to the steward, he says: 'We'll speak English so they won't understand what we say.'"

Mr. Harris drew hard on his cigarette, so that it suddenly glowed close to his small sharp nose and convex forehead, and threw it over the rail behind him.

"You see? He'd found out already who Alvarez was, and he goes on to say he's coming on board the ship with him. He says he knows the Señorita Yolanda is on board and he must see her and tell her something. Alvarez says she's not here but up at the Pension, and he says he'll have to go up there, but what will he do if he gets in a trap and no gun? But he says he'll chance it. He asks Alvarez all about the cargo and what happened at Havana and why the new owner didn't come with us. As if Alvarez would know! But he did! He's had it all hot from that—from you know. A nice kettle of fish you've got yourself into, Mister. Wait till I tell you what he says when Alvarez says, 'Señor, she has married an Inglez on my ship. A young Inglez.'"

James remained perfectly still. In years to come, Mr. Harris, mate of some large ship and emerging from one of his sprees, would tell his shipmates about a man he once knew who got himself into a nice kettle of fish. A sudden access of clairvoyance—which the Scotch have often enough—showed James the big, heavy, not-too-competent Harris of the future, who would always be a talker, a listener through bulkheads, a man who always knew what was happening on shore. James wanted to go below. But the spirit was upon the second mate. It was for moments like these that he lived through the days. It had to be told. He looked down upon the deck as he felt in his pocket for the life-giving cigarette.

"She was comin' back after servin' the *maquinistas,* and I thought I'd miss it, but an officer called her—clapped his hands—and she goes over to him. Even then I thought I'd missed it: he says nothin'. Alvarez says, 'Señor!' like he was chokin'; and he was, too. That johnny-boy had him by the windpipe in the corner. I could see that blasted dago's face through the crack in the wood goin' green. Frightens 'em to pinch their windpipes the way that young feller-me-lad was doin'. And they'd been thick as thieves just before! Thick as thieves! And there was the bloody marimbas jingle-bangin' and fellows dancing with tarts a couple o' fathom away on the floor! Yes!"

Mr. Harris was absorbed. In the dim diffused light reflected from the white walls of the engine room through the lifted skylights James saw his face, rapt and oblivious of the heat, of his own night watch, of the mosquitoes that sang with sudden metallic resonance about his flaring ears. He was inspired for once in his life.

"And he says, 'You are all in his pay, you swine! Don Orlando has bought the men as well as the ship. After he has finished with . . .'"

Even in the dark Mr. Harris had his doubts how far he could tell this part of his tale just as it happened. He broke off and uttered a warning.

"I'm tellin' you this, Mister, so's you'll watch out. He's goin' to lay for you. He's goin' to lay for the lot of us. But he's goin' to do something nasty to that Don Orlando, that chap with the eyeglass in Havana. Alvarez, he says, no, no, we had nothing to do with it; the señorita . . . he goes on talkin' about the señorita so's I couldn't hear, and my girl comes back, and I see him go out and dance with the big Jamaica octaroon that runs the New Bristol. Lily of the Valley, she calls herself. Her husband's there too, a Costaraguan . . ."

He ran on for a while like a trolley, until his impetus was exhausted. The cigarette dropped sparks. He meditated on what he had been saying and was roused by James stepping inside the scuttle to descend. He made no comment. This peculiarity of some men, to receive astonishing or interesting news in silence, was an old story to Mr. Harris. Often it had puzzled, or amazed, or even stupefied him. But not now. He was too sure of himself now. He had the story straight from the old man, who was telling it to the mate at the table. The

girl had got hold of the third all right. Married by the consular agent. And this night's business was no cock-and-bull yarn from a drunken sailor. He had heard it himself. No silence could alter the facts. It was bound to end in what he called "a hell of a stink."

He waited for James to come up. He knew the routine. Steam was rising in all three boilers. The hot air from the cylinders struck his face. He could hear the faint booming of the combustion chambers and the soft hiss of steam. Soon they would be off up the coast to Rio Taga with a deckload of soldiers. Perhaps they would see real fighting there. He hoped so. Mr. Harris wanted things to happen. He was slightly intoxicated at the present moment. He floated, his feet just touching the earth, on a plane where he achieved power without responsibility. The fact that James had married Yolanda de Mara was merely a novel fact to Mr. Harris—he had no understanding of its significance. He heard James coming up the ladder and walked away to the rail. The matter was urgent to him. He wanted to gratify some obscure desire, not to hurt a shipmate but to find out what he was going to do. Like most young people, he cared nothing at all for anybody else in the world. He was preoccupied exclusively with himself; his delicate personal dignity; his desires and their conflict with vague abstractions like duty and patriotism and the Christian religion. Moreover, Mr. Harris had a confused but none the less real feeling that James had "done for himself" by marrying a dago. And he had an equally real desire to know what such an experience was likely to do to a shipmate. Yet the idea that James might, by some miracle, become articulate and tell about it made Mr. Harris almost recoil from him. He leaned over the rail and watched the shore lights. A faint nimbus hung over the town behind the vast barn of a church. He knew that was where he had been to-night. He had seen men in the grip of drunkenness, of savage bullying power, of lust and avarice, but he beheld them as though he had been in a theatre watching them on a stage. He saw them now as from another planet swinging at anchor off on the edge of the world. He knew nothing about anybody save as they hurt or pleased himself. He spat into the dark water and longed for something to happen to him. He had a sudden suspicion that perhaps his way of life was not perfect, that perhaps the old mate, who had been playing his fiddle softly only an hour before and who was now

peacefully sleeping, knew something after all. He found himself biting his nails, and he began to walk to and fro. The name Rio Taga repeated itself in his mind. The next port! Always what he wanted, somehow, was over the skyline. Why on earth couldn't he leave his nails alone? He put his hands in his pockets and turned in the darkness to find James Wishart before him. And Mr. Harris saw him walking to the gangway, where a boat waited. He had lighted a pipe while in the engine room, a short curved briar he loved, and that act impressed Mr. Harris as nothing else would have done. The second mate pivoted round on his heel.

"You're soon off," he muttered. He had a vague and terrific vision of marital ecstasy, one of those recurring impressions that sink and rise altogether on the last day of a man's illusions. He beheld it now as something that defied danger from passionate Costaraguan lovers, from political upheavals and the call of race. James turned to him.

"She'll be ready, tell the old man, when he wants her in the morning. Any time now. And I'll be back at six, tell him."

The second mate moved up close. James saw him now almost as a possible other self. He saw him with even a little envy, so free was that other self from the pain of living. Mr. Harris hunched his shoulders and thrust out his jaw from some obscure instinct inherited from truculent ancestors who were always making trouble for their liege lords in the old wars.

"Mister," he said, "don't you believe what I told you? He's layin' for you. Jesus! if you'd heard him tellin' the steward! Ask Alvarez yourself. I'd 'ave told the old man, only he'd play hell with me for goin' ashore the night before sailin'! You'd better watch out, Mister! He means what he says, that dago!"

Here again, James thought, men worried about the wrong things. He raised his eyes once or twice to the tough little face near his own, as though he were about to speak. But he said nothing of what he knew. He felt immeasurably older than the second mate. Even the latter's earnestness made him seem childish. What could that young man ashore do, compared with the dreadful pain of an incompatible love? What failure could there be in the future to match the disillusion and incomprehension of Yolanda's cry, "I do not count with you!" and the bitterness of her words, "Go to the ship: go, go!" But James, as he remembered the smiling dark face at the window,

did not believe in danger from him. He was in great danger himself. Yolanda had said so. Yolanda had run out to him. He did not believe that she would have turned on him like that if there had been danger for him. Nor did he care so much for that. James was not keenly alive to that sort of panic. He possessed the fatalism that so often goes with presence of mind, and Mr. Harris would never understand the combination.

"Possibly," said James, and stepped to the ladder.

The second mate looked at him over his shoulder. To him it was like the shattering of a romance or the destruction of a faith.

"Possibly!" he repeated. "Possibly the second thought the same, Mister. They got him all right. Do you know what Alvarez told me?"

"A lot, I dare say," admitted James, looking down at the boat that a sailor held to the grating.

"He did that. He doesn't know I heard him telling that dago, but he says, to me, when I met him in the street, that they'd found the chief wanderin' out in the bush, off his head. Off his head, for he's along with the *maquinistas* now. Looks to me as if you was all off your heads, that's all I've got to say."

James went down to the boat.

"Don't blame me, Mister," came down after him. "I've tried to warn you."

The second mate saw James pause before stepping into the boat. He had a momentary impression that nothing he could ever say or do would matter to the man down there. He discovered that beneath this preoccupation with his adventure ashore was a desperate attempt to lift himself by his own bootstraps to assume a nonchalance and an equality of character he knew did not exist. He stood upright suddenly and turned away as he heard James ask him if he had ever tried minding his work. He began to walk hastily to and fro, his chin on his breast.

CHAPTER XIV

AGAIN in timeless sequence these pictures passed through his mind as he lay in his bed that morning. He had the sensation of bruises, of dull pains caused by recent blows. Later he remembered this morning. It remained strangely clear to him, more clear and more important than the events to which it led. He remembered it because the stream of his life, after the swirling rapids and dark romantic gorges and perilous cataracts, became deep and wide and steady. He emerged into the wide plain, and he could see behind him and stretching away ahead the course of his existence.

Now he not only saw nothing of the future, he was not even aware of it. He was absorbed in the crisis in which he was involved. The intensity of his feeling burned every event of that time on his memory. He heard, as he reached the jetty, the boom of a drum and the defiant snarl of a trumpet from the quarter behind the church. He saw the sudden sizzling parabola of a red rocket spring out of the misty radiance over there. He saw the soldiers huddled under the shelter by the harbour master's office step forward and heard their hoarse, unintelligible words. The rocket burst and the sparks died at once in the moisture-laden air. The drum throbbed. The cornet rose to a squeal. James thought of the Salvation Army at home as it beat its way down the streets. This too was a salvation army, saving the people from tyranny by imposing upon them the autocracy of demagogues. Led by a bummer, an Englishman gone native, the second mate had said. Another rocket, like a spurt of blood scaling the darkness, soared and hung, emptying its load of spangles. And the drum, at the head of men marching, beat like a pulse. It rose in volume and died for a moment as they marched under an archway. It stopped.

His feet immediately began to sound on the timbers of the jetty, as though caricaturing that distant and ominous sound. He remembered reflecting for a moment upon the apparent paradox of himself walking on the edge of this turmoil of revolutionary ardour, accepted by those soldiers on the dock,

permitted to walk freely along the street to the hotel. A second thought told him it was not a paradox. These people were an inferior race, temporarily out of hand. They had to be managed. Even their malcontents followed the lead of a renegade Englishman! They were only dangerous as animals were dangerous—when you made some mistake in handling them.

He had been stared at by the customs men at the Aduana as he passed under the gateway where an electric bulb sent down a cone of bright light. He had glanced up the street, the Calle del Mar, and had seen a dozen horse soldiers leave the barracks at a quick trot, their carbines thumping their backs, their feet thrust into huge leather stirrups that made them seem club-footed. And then, by some alchemy of the brain, he was here in the room at the hotel, in darkness and confronting the real peril of spiritual defeat.

He did not turn on the light. The night wind blowing down from Santa Agata had brought a humid coolness, and he closed the door. He walked down the strip of flamboyant Brussels stair carpet that traversed the room at the foot of the beds. He could not see it, but he remembered it as dark green with gargantuan pink rosebuds like conch shells. He moved in a sort of dread, his eyes, averted from the white cone of the mosquito bar. He sat down on the edge of his own bed, and in the midst of feeling suddenly very tired he became aware of a soft sibilant whisper. Someone was on the rear gallery by the shuttered window. Slowly he turned toward the other bed, and his eyes, grown accustomed to the darkness, saw that it was empty.

He paused and thought back quickly. He had made no noise as he came in, stepping cautiously on the echoing floor of the front gallery. They had not heard him. Or perhaps they did not any longer care. The soft sibilant sound held him entranced. He remembered the young man whose full eloquent lips were now making the sounds he heard out there, urgently whispering, repeating the same words close to the louvers of the screened window.

Perhaps they did not any longer care. Perhaps they did not expect that, after what had passed, he himself would return. He sat down lightly on his bed and nursed his knee. If he rushed out there upon them, what good would it do? What good, he asked himself with unconscious cynicism, does anything do when a woman has changed her course? He wished he could feel anger toward her for suddenly assailing him when he was

only doing what he must, his duty. But all he felt was pain like a heavy bruise within him; pain that humiliated him because it seemed to him evidence he knew nothing about managing a woman, nothing about driving her, riding her—whatever you call it that makes it possible to go along together and get one's work done. She had been watching for something and he hadn't got it. It wasn't just his ignorance of her language or her country; it wasn't even his way of becoming unaware of their national animosities. It was rather perhaps that he could not see why she did not forget all that. It was because he accepted all she told him about herself without suspecting what lay underneath, unspoken and incommunicable. That was the thought behind her strange lovely eyes as she had scanned his face.

Now she was scanning another face, he thought with a whimsical cynicism he rarely used. The tense whispering rose and fell in irregular waves. A sudden conviction shook him that these people inebriated themselves with talk; tall talk, eloquent talk, bombastic talk, and talk that was merely a pouring forth of words that meant nothing at all. He felt within the very depths of his being that he could never do it. He strove to comprehend the situation that could demand so many words. How long had they been out there?

Now the whispering died, and James heard footsteps, very light and rapid, moving away. He was gone, then. That torrent of eloquence, by which the country was to be saved eventually, had become temporarily exhausted. And then the door opened. Yolanda, in her yellow silk wrapper, came in quickly and stopped. James stood up as though he expected a reprimand for being there. And he was silent because he had no idea what to say.

She recovered and closed the door softly. She came as far as the foot of his bed and paused.

"You have come back from the ship?" she said.

He could not see her face, but she seemed to be talking to gain time and perhaps poise. He made a faint sound of assent. She took two or three steps toward her own bed, and halted as though she had just thought of something.

"I have been out," she said. "The room was very hot."

Again he made that sound that signified he accepted this also. She went the rest of the way to her bed and seemed to melt into its substance. He heard the faint lisp of the small native

wax vesta and the tiny flame illumined her face as she held the match to a cigarette.

"I thought I heard someone out there," he said.

There was a silence as she carefully dropped the match on the floor.

"Me?" she said in a low tone.

"Someone else," he remarked, busy with his clothes. "I heard him talking to you, and then he went away."

He put on his pajamas and went to the dressing table for a hairbrush. In the mirror he could see her cigarette glowing behind the mosquito bar.

"*Querido,*" she said suddenly, "it was the same man, Don Carlos Almanzor."

"Yes," said James. "What did he want this time?"

He watched the cigarette glow brightly and fade. He put down the brush and turned toward his bed. There was a new accent in her voice that put him on his guard. Why did she try to fool him? The thought passed at the back of his mind that he was easily fooled. Maria Chisola had shown him that.

"*Querido,* listen to me?" she whispered imperiously.

He paused, touching his eyebrow with his finger, his characteristic gesture. Why, he asked himself, should she make any explanations? He looked across at her uncertainly. His eyes, accustomed now to the dark, could see her on the verge of springing out to come to him.

"You told me to go," he said, coming over.

"Because you think of nothing but the ship," she said. "Listen to me. There is trouble, that is why I went out. Trouble for everybody."

"There's nothing new in that," he said quietly. "Everyone tells the same story. What is it?"

"Not what you think. You think I try to frighten you. But this is great danger. Don Carlos—sit down, *querido.* I must whisper—Don Carlos has come into the town, and he has found that the workmen are going to attack the railway in the morning. And when Don Orlando arrives on the *Santa Brigida* he will find the railway in possession of the insurrectos. He will come up here, and Don Carlos will wait to see him."

"Is that what you were talking about?" James asked.

"*Querido,* do you know what it means if those two meet here? Nobody believes Don Carlos is in the town. They think he is down the coast in the *guardacosta.* And he says the workmen

will blow up the train in the morning, with the administrador on board. And then, when Don Orlando arrives on the *Santa Brigida* . . . Do you understand now? I am in trouble, *querido.* I do not know what to do."

"What is it to you now?" he asked.

"Don Carlos does not believe me," she said, looking at her hand as though searching for some forgotten word. The silence that followed made her press the hand to her face. "And you do not either," she muttered.

And again he was silent, so that she twisted her body and looked down at the pillow.

"What does he not believe?"

"That I wish to go away from Costaragua," she said slowly. "He thinks that what I have done is the work of Don Orlando. He thinks Don Orlando can do anything in the world that he wishes. That is why he has made up his mind to see Don Orlando once more. And then he says he will take me away to San Benito."

"And can he?"

"*Querido,* do you know what he will do? He will have soldiers then, remember. He will not care anything about the consul. They wish to start a war, so that they can ask for help. He will have soldiers, and you—you would be able to do nothing. You would have to go to the ship."

She paused a moment, letting him get the picture of her being carried off into the mountains by a victorious schemer while he himself sailed away, no longer of any significance in her world. He sat nursing a knee waiting for her to go on.

"*Dios!*" she murmured to herself. Aloud she said, "You understand now?"

"No," he answered unexpectedly. "He can do nothing. The workmen took his revolver away from him, I heard on the ship."

"You think, when they find out what he wants to do, they will not give him as many as he wants? Besides——" she laughed shortly—"I gave him one."

"You?"

"He said he was defenceless from his enemies," she went on, as if to herself. "Nothing can stop Carlos, anyway. He is like a jaguar when he springs."

"In the morning," said James, "you must come with me to the ship. It will be safer there."

"Me?" she stared at him for a moment.

"You want to stay here, Yolanda?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you said something about a mistake." He gazed across the room at his own bed. Involuntarily he yawned. He was tired. He was tired in spirit also. She heard him yawn and drew hard on her cigarette. To her it was inexplicable that he should suddenly reveal an awareness of the complex character of her emotions.

"You want me to stay here?" she said. "You want to finish? You think, if what I have told you is true—you know I told you on the ship perhaps the insurrectos would come—that you had better go away? But you do not believe me now. You think—" her voice sank to an inaudible whisper and rose again to a murmur—"how can I know what you think? You sit without saying one word!"

She dropped the cigarette in a vase by the bedside and put her hands under her head. James did not make an immediate answer. He knew there was a certain truth in her accusation. When he was suspicious and bewildered he was dumb; and he had never been so suspicious and bewildered as he was now.

"I can't make out what you want me to do," he said at length. "This Don Carlos, is he any good?"

She felt furiously angry at the cool arrogance of the question. There was in it all the pride of race which she always felt in the presence of the English she had known. Sooner or later it emerged, that implacable calm weighing of her countrymen in a scale she could not comprehend. How could one tell that they had not their own secret gauge of women, too?

"Any good? What do you say? You think nobody is any good!" she exclaimed in a low fury. "You ask me what mistake I have made. That is the mistake. All the time you are judging—I feel it!" She struck her breast and drew a few panting breaths. "Tell me," she broke out again, "tell me, you think I am not any good, because when Carlos, a friend of years, who was in prison because of me, comes for help? You think that! You wish me to tell the colonel in the Plaza San Martín and have Carlos arrested? I see it; you do. I would die before I do that! He is Costaraguan, like me!"

CHAPTER XV

THERE was the crisis, he reflected, which had found him unable to meet it. He had been carried away by a sudden wave of confused feelings for her as she sprang at him, as it were to defend a being he himself was unable to comprehend in any way whatsoever. They seemed to live, these people, with the casual fortune and emotional ferocity of wild animals. They spoke of killing in a way that to James seemed unreal; and even when it took place and destroyed someone he had known, remained unreal in his mind. Now Yolanda spoke of dying rather than betray the young man who had borrowed a revolver to replace the heavy German thing the *maquinistas* had taken from him. And the enormous strangeness of such a declaration disturbed him. She would die, she said, and the sinister sincerity in her voice had challenged the fundamental skepticism of his mind. It struck him to a silence of which she had not the key, and which remained like a locked door between them during the night.

After a moment when, like a drowning man, his thoughts sharpened to pictures running with the speed of light, he moved again. It had grown a little lighter. A footstep shuffled on the galleries, and the vigorous fragrance of the native coffee came to him. James had wondered at the effect of that small cup of intensely black liquor without either milk or sugar. A screen door clashed, and footsteps flip-flopped toward the showers in the garden. The room became the refuge of scattered silences. The world was waking to another day of dank moisture. Outside the banks of vapour hung motionless, anchored to the Sierra. On the tops of the trees that filled the swampy area toward the Tortuga River a mist was lying, and the sea was gray and livid in its slow undulations that exploded in a hollow drumming against the miles of sand that reached to Santa Agata.

He sat up and slipped his feet to the floor, lifting the bar from his head and shoulders. He found his slippers and stood up. As he put on his bathrobe and reached for a towel, the sharp high wail of a steamer's whistle reached his ears. It

was like a cry from another planet, worn thin with the traversing of immense distances, plunging at last into the unechoing, rain-charged air of the coast. And at the sound he stood stock still, his eyes on the clock face showing vaguely on the table. That, he was sure, was not the *Candleshoe's* whistle. It had a foreign sound. And he saw Yolanda raise her head, listening. He stepped to the door and went out on the rear veranda.

He could hardly have given any explanation of his sudden move. But the squealing of that whistle, which would be the arriving *Santa Brigida,* seemed to him only one more inexplicable complexity for him. It had aroused Yolanda at once; she recognized it as something familiar and comprehensible in her life. The *Santa Brigida* was coming in. Don Orlando was coming in. And he, James Wishart, was going out. There seemed the elements of a solution for his anxieties in all this. As he turned the thin brass tap of Señora Munn's shower bath he saw that for men like himself there was no peace on the land. The problems of the old *Candleshoe,* thrust suddenly upon him, were simple. He had the training and the temperament to handle them as they came along. But nothing he had ever learned in his life gave him any measure of Yolanda's mind. He discovered that you could love a woman, and feel that she was a fool who spoke of dying to defend a man for whom she had expressed contempt. James could not see the fallacy in such a train of thought. Men of his race never do. He felt, rather than knew, that here lay the danger from which most of his countrymen shrank, from which they were protected by fidelity to girls at home. A man was forever out of his depth with Yolanda. Her fidelity was pledged to an ideal he could not understand. And he wondered whether he was not destined to seek his consolation on the sea, to leave shore life to those who could fathom it and women to their masters.

He saw her turn her head toward him as he came in and closed the door. She was reaching for the coffee cup old Manuela was lifting from the tray, the small cup without a handle which James found so unfamiliar. Yolanda was pale in the dim light. The passion of the night before was gone.

"You have coffee too?" she asked, and the old woman shuffled over to him. He set the cup and saucer down on the dressing table.

"Will you come back again, *querido?*" went on Yolanda as Manuela, pushing the door with her back, retreated. He buckled

his belt and went over with one of his quiet deft movements, a comb in his hand.

"Why are you not angry any more, Yolanda?"

She looked at him solemnly for a moment as she drank. Her face, of an even pallor that was like old alabaster, the heavy bronze-coloured tresses hanging over her shoulders, enraptured him once more. The memory of her as she sat there against the tarnished brass rods and knobs of Señora Munn's Tottenham Court Road bedstead used to return to him often. She set the cup down and put her bare arms round him. She took the comb and raked out his wet hair with quick movements.

"Why not? Because being angry with you, *querido,* is useless. You keep silent. Nothing matters to you except what you want, eh? So I am not angry any more."

"Then you will come on the ship? I'll ask the captain, and we will get that girl Gina to come with you."

"Gina will not come. She wants to keep out of the way until that Americano comes back. She is with her friends . . . the *auditore's* family. They are with the *maquinistas.* So you see, it would be bad for them if she came on the ship. No. I must stay here until the ship sails. I wish to see Don Orlando, and it will be best to see him here."

"Here?" She nodded.

"In this room, *querido.* Where we have loved, and quarrelled, and now make friends again. *Querido,* do you know this is the only house I have ever had? This room. But by and bye . . ."

She drew the comb through his hair gently. Their faces were close together. He felt, as he always did, a little delirious, as he gazed into those eyes that were like brown seaweed beneath the surface of a sunlit sea. She had that quality some women possess of seeming more perfect at close range, as though her flesh held a secret loveliness only a paramour might know. He was silent for a moment, but she knew by the look in his eyes it was not the silence she dreaded but the mute worship she desired to draw from him.

"What will you say to him?" he asked presently.

"That I am married and wish to leave his protection. He will be angry, not at me, but at you, *querido,* because he will not believe I would dare to do this myself. Then I will warn him that he is in danger here in Puerto Balboa."

"You will not tell him what the danger is?"

"It will not be necessary. He will understand who is here.

They will be telling him even now of Bustillo and the *guarda-costa* that is in the mud of the shore. And I—I have a pain here—" she touched her bosom—"because I gave Carlos the revolver of the capitan."

"You did that because you still like him a little," said James smiling. "Because he is Costaraguan."

She looked at him with the enigmatic shining eyes of a woman who is understood.

"Yes, oh, yes!" she said breathlessly. "*Querido,* you know he is a wonderful young man, and he—he loves me. He thinks he loves me." She laughed and bit her lip. "He is a devil, and I am afraid—you understand. So I shall send a message and warn Don Orlando at once. . . . Then, when he comes I shall tell him what we have done."

"Give me the message," he said. "I will give it to the harbour master."

"No!" she said, wagging her finger before her face. "No writing—I will send a servant with the message in his mouth. Words only Don Orlando will understand. I think they are looking for Don Carlos now, but he will be with the workmen."

They looked at each other involuntarily, and he bent over and kissed her.

"*Querido,*" she murmured. "You will not forget what I said, that this is the only house I ever had? When we get to New York, give me a house."

"Yes," he said. "I'll do that." And held her a moment. Then with a bashful air he turned away.

As he reached the jetty the gates were being closed by the customs guards. Men with sacks over their heads, men with ponchos and immense cowls, men with filthy old army coats, and even one Chinaman with an open umbrella, which he held high as though signalling a bus, were clustered about the gates. A squad of soldiers stood with grounded rifles in front of the barracks, watching. Soldiers stood on the jetty holding their rifles across the entrance and exchanging jokes over their shoulders with comrades on the barracks balcony. James pointed to the *Candleshoe* and raised one of the rusty weapons gently to get by. The swart face of its owner grew solemn as he stared at the gringo and then at the incoming ship.

The *Santa Brigida,* moving slowly to the jetty, gave a strangled whoop on the whistle that hung cock-eyed from the front of her dinged and blistered yellow funnel. She was a

long, thin, turtle-backed affair, a survival of the 'eighties, her bowsprit giving her a sharp, spinsterish appearance. Her old-fashioned anchors stood out, as Mr. Punshon, watching her, remarked, like a man with his thumbs in his armholes. She had a slight list, and James saw that her deck was packed with dusky men in white clothes. Mr. Punshon had a phrase for that. He said she looked like a Christy Minstrel show on tour. He paused in the midst of these elegant metaphors to order the boat ashore "for the chief." Mr. Punshon was pleased to have James for a colleague. He had a great passion for what he called in his booming bass tones "practical men," and somehow he was convinced that James was one of these useful creatures. He reduced the cigarette-smoking Mr. Harris to a staring silence by a rumbling eulogy of men who were practical. He never betrayed any consciousness of the obvious inference, that Mr. Harris was not practical. "I wonder what the old cuckoo calls himself," Mr. Harris remarked to the bo'sun, who had no idea.

Mr. Punshon stood by the bridge deck rail watching the *Santa Brigida,* heaving and listing more than ever to the strain of going astern, move to the jetty. He saw that she had the mail flag up, hanging wet and straight to the halyard. There might be a letter from his wife. Mrs. Punshon was expert at watching the shipping news in the paper. He saw James in the boat looking at the mail flag. There was no need, Mr. Punshon thought, for him to expect a letter. The young fellow had married that beautiful young lady and would probably settle in the country. Mr. Punshon had often known of such cases in various parts of the world. He had no information as to how these ventures turned out, but he assumed on principle that they lived happily ever after. He himself had once married and had lived happily ever after. Nothing could destroy the rubicund benevolence of his outlook. Just to behold his enjoyment of life exasperated Mr. Harris, a fact of which the old mate was unaware.

He had always wished, however, that fortune had granted him a son. Those three strapping red-cheeked daughters in Glasgow were fine, fine; but a lad like yonder young man would have been the perfect joy to him now. And he himself, long ago, before the parents of Mr. Harris had even met, he had had a love affair with a creole girl who lived below the levee on Tchoupitoulas Street, in New Orleans, near where his old ship, the *Western Star,* was loading cotton. Would have married her too, he reflected, if the *Western Star* had gone there again. A pretty

sweet maid she was, twittering her funny Gumbo French in his ear. . . . Nobody, looking at Mr. Punshon in his soiled and rumpled white clothes and battered badge cap, would have divined any such thoughts. James did not, as he reached the deck, and Mr. Punshon said in a hearty mumble, "Well, son? And how is the señora this morning?"

Each morning he had made this demand, and James had made a suitable, not too serious reply. To-day James went aft. He found Captain Millerton in his cabin, staring through the side scuttle at the *Santa Brigida* and scratching his ribs. He turned at the sound of the door opening and pointed through the window.

"There's something in the wind," he said sharply. "Shut the door, Mister. Look at those niggers." He reached for his binoculars. In his pajamas Captain Millerton had a bohemian air. With his beard he resembled a hastily awakened inhabitant of the Quarter. James looked over the captain's shoulder.

"There's something in the wind," repeated the latter, staring fixedly. Then in a lower tone as though to himself, "He's there, all right."

"Who?" asked James. "The owner?"

"Ah, the owner." Captain Millerton took a short sharp look at James, as though it had struck him that the man he was talking about was owner of more than the ship. He went on gazing through his shagreen-covered night glasses at a group on the upper deck of the *Santa Brigida*. "I'd give a five-pound note to know what he's brought that lot up here for. There's hundreds of blackbirds on her. On their way home to Jamaica, too, or I'm a Dutchman. We'd better hold our steam until I've been ashore, Chief. Heard the yarn the steward picked up last night?"

James said he had. He added that he had confirmation of it, and went on to make his request. Captain Millerton rubbed his beard and walked a few steps.

"Why didn't you bring her with you?" he asked.

"She's seeing him first," said James.

"You ought to have brought her. Suppose we have to go off in half an hour! You'll never get her to do as you tell her. She's one of the sort that's got fifty arguments you never thought of. But if that yarn about the workmen's true—h'm." He paced for a moment and then stopped to fill his pipe from a stone jar. An idea had struck him. In spite of his cantankerous

attitude toward Don Orlando Perkins, Captain Millerton had had enough experience of the world to know the man was no fool. A toff, but no fool, he put it. And an idea had come to him that Don Orlando was going "to put something over on that Martinez crowd." He gnawed his beard. The way those fellows stood round on the deck of the *Santa Brigida,* in their new white suits of cotton drill, just drawn from the Canal Commissary, as the captain could see, indicated to his shrewd eyes that they had agreeable orders. Hard-bitten muscular giants from the plantations, toughened by a couple of years on the steam shovels and rock-blasting gangs of the Canal Zone, confident and well heeled, they lolled on the rail or lay under the fore-and-aft awnings on their bright yellow suit cases and brown bundles of bedding. James took a look at them through Captain Millerton's glasses and caught sight of the man they were talking about. Caught sight of him as he stepped to the rail to look at the *Candleshoe,* and saw with him a woman.

James heard Captain Millerton saying, in his dry, detached way, that the new owner knew a thing or two. Quite a flash piece, that; one of those Frenchy tarts you see round the opera house in Havana. Captain Millerton had seen him with her the night before the ship sailed. Travelling with him, eh? Well, she was one of those girls with a look in her eye. . . . Always get a man with the dollars. "She'll be dancing at the opera in San Benito in a few weeks. Name in letters a foot high all over town. La-something-or-other. And she'll have a casa down a quiet street, and you'll see our owner getting out of a cab about one in the morning, and using his own latchkey, too. That's what it is to have money. Well—" he looked at James with a not unfriendly scrutiny—"you'd have done well to get your girl out of his way. He's not the sort of. . . . You know what I mean."

"He has her business in his hands," said James, "and she thinks it best not to antagonize him while the trouble's on."

"That's right. He ought to be shot, though, bringing that French dancer down here."

James looked at her. She had big breasts and haunches that her red dress revealed to the interest of the crowds of Negroes on the deck below her. She wore white kid gloves to her elbow and yellow high-heeled shoes. She had a purple sunshade edged with lace and a lorgnon with a long ivory handle. She had a long necklace of crystal and Indian bracelets on her bare upper

arms. The practised eyes of Captain Millerton noted these things as well as the expensive and rakish panama hat.

"She's been getting all she could down in Colon," he muttered. "Business?" he said suddenly. "You mean money?"

"A little," said James. "She wants nothing of his."

"I should say not. Well, there's no sign of any military movements yet. Train's late."

"There's been talk of derailing it," said James.

"Well, they'd shove it back on the rails," said the captain. "Trains are always getting derailed in these countries. If there's no sign of them when I go ashore you'd better come too."

In his own cabin James felt this was good counsel. He had a feeling of vague anxiety in his breast. The memory of Yolanda's mood haunted him. If the ship did not sail he wanted to return to her, to sit in that garden behind the Pension if it didn't rain, or on the gallery outside their room, and watch the beauty of her face, like a delicate cameo against Señora Munn's dirty gray-painted walls. The conversation with Mr. Barr was like a strange dream now. Danger in love lay within, the danger of misunderstanding a woman's heart. What, he wondered, was the thrill if there was no danger? And perhaps the solution of the problem was that love ebbed and flowed out of unison with the ebb and flow of life.

After breakfast he went below and found her ready. He saw himself in New York, a fabulous waterside of which he had heard, getting the boilers repaired. He would find some quiet hotel for Yolanda. The new men were on the job, glad to be away from Costaragua. Up on deck again he found Mr. Harris taking rapid walks to and fro, head down and hands in pockets. The second mate was absorbed in private meditations. The sudden unexpected revelation, a close-up, of that woman on the *Santa Brigida,* through the chart-room telescope, had flung him emotionally on his beam ends. Just as he was leaving port, too. He walked rapidly, ignoring James. Mechanically, however, he ranged up to the gangway as he saw Captain Millerton coming, and the thought of these two going ashore again, while he himself remained on deck, threw the second mate into a sensuous gloom. As the boat was rowed ashore he retreated to the poop, where Rafael Alvarez saw him raise his fists and shake them at the dank awning. Mr. Punshon, down in his cabin, was regaling himself with a jaunty jig on his fiddle. The merry tune came up the ventilator and assaulted Mr. Harris in his darker mood.

But ashore they were not thinking of Mr. Harris. In the office of Leake & Co., on the Calle del Mar, Captain Millerton and his companion sat and listened to the consular agent. Mr. Leake told them the train was late but not derailed—as yet. But Puerto Balboa was under martial law. Nobody was allowed to pass through the Plaza. He himself had had to cross the railway and ride down to the beach behind La Silla and enter the town that way. The soldiers were expecting a rush of workmen from the old quarter behind the church. Several soldiers from San Paulo had been wounded already.

Mr. Leake, as he went on talking, was sorting letters. He arranged half a dozen and handed them to the captain, who put on his glasses. Captain Millerton offered one to James. The handwriting was strange to him. He heard Mr. Leake answer the captain's question. Yes, Don Orlando was ashore but had gone on to the railway office. James put the letter in his pocket and got up.

"I'll be along to the hotel," he said.

A thin rain was falling as he hurried down the street. He wanted to see Yolanda. The desire beat in his brain like a pulse. The tenseness of the atmosphere, that strangely enough was increased by Mr. Leake's gentlemanly pallor and calmness, affected James. The long-drawn shriek of a locomotive far away, emerging from a cutting, struck his ears. He buttoned his waterproof and stepped out across the streaming space in front of the Custom House. He heard shouts and the sharp smack of a rifle from the Plaza. He saw men running fast, crouching as they sped across the street, and vanishing down alleys that led to the wall of the railway shops. One he saw asprawl in a deep puddle as though he had plunged in to swim. More and more men darted and swerved diagonally across the street, and rifles cracked, the sound seeming to be damped out by the suddenly streaming rain that fell straight down, in long leaden rods of liquid, and the gutters began to roar. The ships were obscured by the curtain of rain. He ran on toward the hotel.

What he ought to have done, he reflected, as he reached the gates of Señora Munn's domain, was to have ordered her briefly to pack up and come on board with him. To have her safely once more in that spare cabin on the *Candleshoe* would be an unspeakable relief. But he could never do that. She would, he understood, be always intractable. In a flash of premonition

he saw the two of them torturing each other and unable to endure a parting year after year. Well, he thought, glancing at the brimming tank where the young alligator lay in an ecstasy of watery bliss, that seemed to be the way of it. It was better than that other experience, when Maria Chisola had played the weak little cheat. He was running up the stairs to the balcony when he saw Señora Munn beckoning to him from the office.

Since the terrible night when she had locked herself in her chamber against the unspeakable Colonel Martinez and his staff, Señora Munn had been far from well. She had kept her room most of the time. The rain always had the effect of depressing her spirits. Now it was not the rain that gave her the look of a frightened black-eyed rabbit. She motioned James to come in and retreated toward the desk.

"This is a dreadful business," she said. She laid one hand on the desk and the other on her flat bosom.

"Is anything the matter?" he asked, ready to dart out again. Señora Munn listened, staring at him.

"They are quarrelling," she said. "Can't you hear? There! A chair broken! You don't know, of course. Don Orlando has arrived with a—a lady. It is most unfortunate. He comes right in. Selects the rooms himself. Not adjoining. That is always his way. And, of course, insists on the first floor."

She continued to stare at James, who heard a powerful contralto raised in vituperation. There was a thump, as of something falling.

"They are moving the piano into her room," she said. "It's ridiculous, when she is going up to the city at once."

James listened. Through the wooden building voices competed with the contralto. Heavy objects dragged over the floor of the balcony shrieked and crackled as boards parted with splinters. And then James heard Yolanda's voice. She was upbraiding someone in Spanish.

"There!" said Señora Munn. "She has found them, those two. Why did he want to bring that creature here? You know he thought Yolanda was in San Benito. I thought he was going to strike me when I told him. Not that I care. The administrador will settle his hash for him. The train is coming. I called you in to prevent you getting in his way. But Yolanda will be sure to find out the situation. I'm sure it's very difficult for me. Shall I make the bill out up to-night?"

"You mean they—the new people—are on the same floor?" he said.

"In the next room but one and the next but three. Not connecting. The only one vacant except the top floor. Most awkward, but if you are going, as Yolanda said this morning——Oh, my gracious goodness! What's that?"

The stiff starched folds of her white skirts rustled as she whirled round and dashed through the bead curtain that hung over the rear door. And James dashed after her, for what they had heard was the loud shouting of Don Orlando's voice, the quick double-double detonation of an automatic, and that loud, high scream of a woman hit.

Señora Munn, emerging from the cross passage on the rear gallery, thrust out an arm and pushed James back. "Wait!" she said in a harsh, withered voice. Her ringlets were wet and shining. The dead blackness of her eyes made them look like holes in her head. Her mouth, with its austere moustache, worked convulsively as she struggled to hold the young man back from what she saw on the gallery. As James overpowered her, he saw Don Orlando rush across the garden and stop as something whizzed past his head. He picked it up and came back with it in his hand. He followed James Wishart into the room where a dark, furious woman with superb naked arms, her red dress rucked above her knees, was holding the body of a girl whose hair, in close coils about her head, was like a golden helmet.

CHAPTER XVI

A WEEK later, on an evening when the clouds held their rain and the wind from Santa Agata blew the air clear of the dank vapour rising from the sodden vegetation, Mr. Leake looked through his telescope at the *Candleshoe* rolling gently as she headed down the coast toward Rio Taga. Her lights showed bright against the gray horizon, and a long trail of black smoke streamed ahead of her in the following wind. As Mr. Leake peered at her and listened to the man in the far shadows of the veranda, the Costaraguan flag was hauled down from her gaff.

"Yes," he agreed, walking away from the telescope, "it is over, and you may take the credit of it."

"And Colonel von Stücke, surely. In that history of Costaragua you are writing, you'll have to give a chapter to Von Stücke's march from Lake Cristobal to San Paulo. He drove Gonzalez and his bandits right under our new guns on the left bank of the river. El Chico has escaped and I daresay the fact that he was a German count had something to do with it. Our friend, the colonel, is rather a devotee of the old order."

"So are you, I imagine," said Mr. Leake, taking a bottle from a tray and pouring out liqueurs.

"Why not? It was the old order that brought us through this brush with the apostles of liberty. Did you hear, by the way, the story of El Chico recruiting volunteers in Las Quemas? They all vanished, of course, when he rode in. So after looting the two shops and digging up a few saddles and machetes, his army went on. An old woman who had been too feeble to run away crawled up the belfry of that immense church the Spaniards built in Las Quemas and struck the bell. She told the people of a miracle. El Chico had ridden his mule into the church and the devil had snatched him away to hell. She saw the mule come out at a gallop and tear off after the rest of the army. All the people in the place came to the church to see the site of the miracle and to give thanks for their deliverance. And while they

were waiting for the priest to appear they saw El Chico in the pulpit, grinning at them, his face just visible over the desk. When they turned to run they found his men at the doors. He preached to them. He told them *yanquis* were coming to steal their chicle and hennequen fields and they must declare him, El Chico, president. And he took every man and boy in the village. We have just sent them back there. A pity we could not have got him. As a moral effect. Now he's back in Las Esmeraldas his legend will grow again. Imagine the shock they got when they saw him there smiling down at them!"

"Well, Gonzalez won't trouble us any more."

"Ah, but El Chico was worth a dozen of Gonzalez. That big Camagua ranchero never inflamed anybody's imagination. That's the secret of men like Carlos Almanzor, and even our friend the schoolmaster. Gas! Nothing else goes with these people. If you have gas you can swing them any way you wish."

"I gave him credit for more decency than he had," said Mr. Leake, lighting a cigarette.

"How much decency can a man have who robs his employer in England and goes native in a place like this? That costeno wife of his was his strength with the crowd, but it showed how poor a thing he was. He wasn't even faithful to her. Von Stücke had always been chummy with him, you know, and Von Stücke told me he had been after that Italian girl you were speaking of. He was easy. Lucky he escaped to the *Santa Brigida* before they found out he had sold them to the railway!

"By the way, that chap will be here soon. What are you going to do about his syndicate? He came down on the train to-day from San Paulo."

"Well, you can make him an offer on my behalf for his interests. He's quite right, you know. His information is absolutely correct. There's iridium and chromite in that ore on his concession. The man Hannerson was sent down there by Don Orlando. Claxon got hold of him and bought him booze in San Benito. Booze and women. Well, Hannerson doesn't need either any more. But the concession is cut in two by our hydro-electric scheme. The mines are useless without electric power. He can sell or go home to his Hispaniola Syndicate."

"He talks a great deal, but he's no fool. I thought his plans quite good," said Mr. Leake.

"As far as they went. But Costaragua cannot wait for small

concessionaires to run round getting money to build a score of little power plants. Less voltage in politics and more in the generators. You know the saying about us. Too many Bolívars and not enough San Martíns. It's all right for our young men to dream dreams but not to have hallucinations."

The voice of the man in the shadow paused a moment and then said:

"Put that in your book."

"Thanks, I will," said Mr. Leake drily.

"The world is changing," said the man in the shadow. "A sort of fermentation is going on. Even here we have Hindoo peddlers dropping leaflets on the Anglo-Saxon Menace. Our night telegraph clerk is a member of the Internationale! Altruists spring up all round us, as though some chap had been sowing—what is it he sowed?—dragon's teeth? They came up armed men, if I remember rightly. I suppose altruists come from the jaw bones of asses. . . . You should hear them in the halls of congress at San Benito! A little thing like a railway is beneath their dignity. As for money, it grows on the hedges in England. Work? They think it's some sort of disease one catches at home. Tax the foreigner! they howl. You'd think foreigners were something to eat."

"You want me to put all this in my book?" said Mr. Leake.

"Eh? Well, would you?"

"Differently expressed, it's already in," said Mr. Leake.

"Ah, yes." The man in the shadow moved and his chair creaked. "Think what would have happened if this business had ended differently: the work of years destroyed! And Costaragua would move back thirty years. We don't want another Urdenata, with his round-ups of Liberals in corrals and *llanero* marksmen shooting into the brown of them. We don't want any Mister Pelhams or El Chicos, either."

"Or Don Carlos Almanzors," added Mr. Leake.

"I blame—well, that's a private matter, Leake. It takes all sorts to make a world. And yet I'm glad he got away over the frontier. You never knew his father, did you? Just the same, once he found his feet out here."

"I don't go all the way with you," said Mr. Leake. "We haven't heard the last of him. He'll find his way to New Orleans, and the Gonzalez crowd will have another try. I can't help wishing that a bullet had found him."

"You are regretting that girl. Men have been quarreling over her since she was sixteen."

"He meant to kill Don Orlando, you may be sure of that. And the extraordinary part of the case is that she had borrowed that firearm from the captain of the ship to protect herself. How Carlos got it is a mystery."

"No mystery. She probably gave it to him out of pity. And then had a fit of remorse. Dramatics! Dramatics!"

"Very serious dramatics for her. Our friends' French *amante de cœur* has taken it to heart. She's gone into retreat at the Convent of St. Candelaria, and she's not seeing Don Orlando any more."

"Dramatics again!" came from the man in the shadow. "It's in the air. Romance, you know. La Perla won't take long to get sick of Santa Candelaria. Caravosa is a lonely place. Even the nuns will be glad when we have the railway going past those long white walls. She couldn't have had an audience in San Benito, anyhow, you know, while Martinez had half the cabinet in prison. You idealize women, Leake. You think they are all like your wife—too good for this sinful country."

"Do I? Oh, do I? Well, have it your own way; but it was my wife, not I, who thought she was too good for this sinful country. I certainly don't compare La Perla with my wife. I merely expressed admiration of the way La Perla behaved in a trying crisis. After all, it wasn't her quarrel. And if Don Orlando hadn't been a fool he would never have been where the girl could have been in the line of fire."

"He has offered a reward of ten thousand pesos, dead or alive," said the man in the shadow. "In a day when nearly a hundred men were killed, the death of a woman by accident is to be expected. And the girl running off to you and marrying that fellow was a surprise to Don Orlando. He ought to go into a monastery for a while. Las Esmeraldas will serve the same purpose. You know there's one thing most men never discover about women. They're all alike."

Mr. Leake did not offer any comment upon this. He heard his servant come to the door and signal that dinner was ready and nodded, but he made no move.

"In essentials," he said at last.

"In nonessentials," said the voice. "I found that out when I was a young man in London. If they get what they want they

are as sweet as sugar. If they don't, then they show their claws or prowl off on some other track."

Mr. Leake wondered what had led to this discovery by the young man in London. At any rate, he reflected, a man who had married the richest woman in the Camagua Valley, and had made her father president of the republic, was entitled to lecture on the subject. He said nothing. He knew these confidences were merely the recreations of an executive.

"Different standards of integrity," murmured the man in the shadow.

"Do you want me to put that in my book?" asked Mr. Leake. He learned that he was to please himself about that. He wondered if marrying a foreigner gave a man a special insight into such mysteries. Probably it did. He was about to make a remark about Señor Pelham when he heard someone entering the house. The screen door downstairs shut, and the voice, the well-remembered voice of Mr. Reid B. Claxon of the Hispaniola Syndicate, rose in resonant response to Mr. Leake's servant. Mr. Leake struck a match and lighted his green-shaded lamp as he heard Mr. Claxon ascending the stairs.

He halted at the entrance to the porch, as though uncertain of his welcome. Mr. Leake took a step or two with his hand held out, and his visitor, with his head thrown back and his mouth slightly ajar, extended his own hand with an air of forgiving Mr. Leake all his sins.

"Glad to see you," said Mr. Leake. "Have you had dinner?"

"Mr. Leake," said Mr. Claxon, "I'd not dream of intruding at such short notice as this."

"Not at all," said the consular agent. "No trouble, I assure you. In fact——"

Mr. Claxon sat down and put up his hand. He drew out some papers and a fountain pen.

"I may say I've a date with a lady this evening, Mr. Leake. I came to tell you about that San Paulo business. Mr. Leake, I've had one hell of a time!"

"We've all had that," murmured Mr. Leake.

"Harvey Hannerson killed, and then the revolution in San Benito! It put the kibosh on my plans. But don't think I let any grass grow under my feet up there. I went to the *avocado* you recommended, and between us we drafted the prospectus of the Iridium Development Company. And we got it registered

when the trouble began. There was me waiting for Harvey and him brought to the dock stiff. What luck, eh? A chance bullet fired across the river does for a man that's lived through a hail of them more than once. A good man gone, Mr. Leake, if he did drink!"

Mr. Claxon accepted the whisky and soda held out to him in an abstracted fashion. Without drinking it, he went on with his tale.

"I never expected, when I heard the Liberals were in again, to get slugged the way I was, Mr. Leake. Our concession is as clear as it can be, and my map tallies with the government map in San Paulo. But how in thunder do they find river rights up there? It's all gorges and cataracts. Yet there we are! I find a new company, the Las Esmeraldas Hydro-Electric Company, has acquired the river rights from Striker-Perkins, and—why, it's the biggest gawd-dam swindle any dago outfit ever put over on an American business man! My concession isn't worth a wooden nickel if the courts sustain a franchise like that."

"They'll sustain it all right," said Mr. Leake.

"And I suppose the government will be hurt when they find American capital don't come down here," said Mr. Claxon drily. He gulped half his whisky.

"They haven't gone to all that trouble just to injure you," said the other. "It's all part of a policy."

"You bet it is!" agreed Mr. Claxon. "A policy to drive capital out of the country. My company own over a million pesos' worth of Costaraguan Sevens. Well, what the banks'll do to the next bond issue in New York'll be plenty. You'll pay eight per cent., or I'm a Dutchman. Gawd A'mighty, haven't they any sense at all?"

"I think you've jumped to conclusions too hastily," said Mr. Leake. "As a matter of fact, I am empowered to make you an offer for the concession on behalf of the Striker-Perkins interests. You understand, of course, that the ores cannot be profitably worked except by the electric process. Now the offer will enable you to get your expenses back and a fair dividend from tonnage."

"I'll not take a cent less than five thousand and five cents a ton on the output."

He stared out into the sudden night beyond the screens. A mosquito had got him on the way up, and he scratched his neck.

Mr. Leake, in his white drill suit and gleaming pumps, walked away into the gloom of the far end of the porch. He was wondering what Mr. Claxon would say if the offer were refused. Of course, an interminable lawsuit might tie up the hydro-electric scheme. He returned and took a box of Havanas from a drawer. Mr. Claxon accepted one.

"That's five thousand pesos, you mean."

"No, sirree! It's five thousand dollars I mean. In God We Trust, all others cash. Yes, five thousand dollars. Draft on a New York bank. I'll be frank with you, Mr. Leake. I need the money. The Hispaniola Syndicate can do with some too."

"It may be possible to arrange it for you. The administrador, Don Francisco, will decide in the morning."

"He's here still, is he? Isn't there anything in this country he doesn't decide? Say, he must be some man, your Don Francisco."

"Oh, yes." The faint affirmative evoked a sudden movement of Mr. Claxon's body. He drank the rest of his whisky and stood up.

"I'll be on my way," he said, lighting the cigar he had been holding. "Date with a lady. Five thousand, eh? It's worth it. Only Harvey Hannerson knew there was chromite there."

"I'll have something definite in the morning."

"You have something definite now, Mr. Leake. I've just said it. With the usual commission. Iridium is a specialized market. Chromite, why it's going to be what thorium was in the old days when they began to make gas mantles. Harvey told me what it does to steel, that stuff."

"Quite so!" said Mr. Leake. "When you've got it."

For a moment Mr. Claxon stood with his head thrown back, cigar and match both held in front of his face. He looked abstractedly at the Englishman, for whom he had a feeling of confused respect and dislike. He wanted, somehow, to see what would happen if he thumped Mr. Leake on the back, tried to put some sort of life into him. He felt the man freeze every time he looked at him. He wanted to think Mr. Leake was a fool, and the nearest he got to it was an uneasy suspicion that Mr. Leake was thinking the same about him. It was to frustrate this ever-present feeling that he blustered about Harvey Hannerson, who had mumbled over countless whiskies the story of his visit to Las Esmeraldas. But as he looked at Mr. Leake

before relighting the Havana cigar, he was suddenly assailed by a wave of commiseration for a man who was going on living in Costaragua year after year instead of going back to little old New York with Gina, Gina Rovelli, a woman in a thousand! The match died, and he took another and expelled a vast plume of smoke.

"That's up to you and the crowd who thought up the river-rights scheme," he remarked. "Ive got to hand it to those boys up in San Benito," he went on, holding out his hand. "They talk a lot about the gringos from North America getting their hooks into the country's resources and a lot of blah like that, but a gringo's got to get up early in the mornin' to put anything over on an *avocado* who's been hired by a Britisher. See you to-morrow."

For a minute or two there was a silence after he had passed through the screen door downstairs. The servant appeared, ghostly white in the gloom, to announce dinner once more.

"So that's our friend, is it?" said the man in the shadow. "Well, you can give him his five thousand. And five cents for five years. There won't be any output for a year or two, you know. If he'd asked a few more questions he'd have discovered that payment of royalties to foreign syndicates for more than five years is illegal. The strange thing is that men like him take pride in beating you on a technicality themselves. Anybody who has had a lawsuit in the States knows that. Down here it's Latin-American duplicity, deceit and crookedness! Tell me, Leake, are they fundamentally warped? Or is it the climate?"

"Oh, these chaps come down to clean up and clear out, of course. It's all a speculative venture. They don't know what you're doing and they don't want to. Clean up and clear out."

A tall broad-shouldered man rose up from his chair and moved toward the wall. He reached out and took a book from the shelf. His hair shone thick and white in the soft radiance of the lamp. Mr. Leake lighted a two-branched candlestick that stood on the bookcase.

"Do we know what we're doing, Leake? Sometimes I think we move blindly after all. The little chaps say we're after money. But, in the last analysis, what we do takes a long time to emerge. It isn't always what we planned at the beginning. The material we work in is full of structural defects." He

fluffed the leaves of the book. "Something I saw here once—stuck in my memory, Leake—here." He began to read:

> *"Such men as thou, who wade across the world*
> *To make an epoch, bless, confuse, appall,*
> *Are in the elemental ages' chart*
> *Like meanest insects on obscurest leaves*
> *But incidents and grooves of Earth's unfolding*
> *Or as the brazen rod that stirs the fire*
> *Because it must."*

He closed the book and thrust it back into place.

"'*Incidents and grooves of Earth's unfolding*'! That's all we are, I'm afraid. However, let us have our dinner. You must come up and see us at Albatorra, Leake, now the trouble is over. I've been laying out a golf course up there. You know, these chaps need recreation. Takes their minds off their hereditary grievances. . . . '*To make an epoch, bless, confuse, appall.*' We don't get any thanks for it, though. Not that it matters. . . . Don't put that in your book."

CHAPTER XVII

MR. HARRIS, waiting for four bells to take an easy dog watch, stood in the doorway of the chief's room and looked down in skeptical astonishment at James Wishart, who was writing up his log. Sometimes Mr. Harris sucked a tooth with resounding candour and contemplated a chewed match. The cretonne curtain that Mr. Barker had torn from a cabaret in Lisbon and which had never been washed floated darkly from Mr. Harris's shoulders like the academical gown of an impoverished and fraudulent professor.

To the second mate it was incredible that a man could have had the experiences of James Wishart and not wish to discuss them. Mr. Harris had had experiences, too. He had seen the Negroes of the *Santa Brigida* charge the mob. He had danced about the deck of the *Candleshoe* watching them climb on two flat cars and start them rolling until, by the power of a hundred yelling men, they were rushing shoreward into the crowd that pressed back on itself in horror. He had seen those cars hurtling with blood-stained wheels at the insurrectos climbing the barricaded railway yard. He had heard shots and had seen men crumple or drop to their knees. He had seen an explosion, the sound of which rebounded from Strikers' Cay and La Silla in a stupendous avalanche of crashes. And he had seen the mob melt away before columns of short, bronze-faced men in dark green khaki, marching in goosestep and armed with new rifles.

All this he had told James over and over again; but of the events at the Pension Francia, which Mr. Harris was dying to hear, there came no word at all. Even more strange than this —to Mr. Harris—was the silence of James about Mr. Barker. Had he heard that the old man offered to let him come back for the voyage? If he had, James made no comment. What he might think of Mr. Barker, who lay in the railway hospital with a shattered hand, refusing to return to his job when it was offered him, Mr. Harris could not learn. And so Mr. Harris, standing at ease against the door jamb, looked down at James

as though he were being cheated of some extraordinary privilege. He sucked a tooth.

"To have a thing like that happen, eh?" he said. "Why it must have been enough to knock a feller silly—Gawdstruth!"

He had suddenly remembered his spiritual agonies on the voyage down from Havana. Suppose she'd taken a fancy to *him;* she might have helped him over a harbour master's job, and he'd have been stuck there, a widower. . . . His eyes became opaque as he contemplated himself in that rôle. But would he have? Well, it showed you. . . . He thought deeply.

The bell on the bridge rang two quick double strokes. Mr. Harris looked down at his canvas shoes and took a cigarette from a packet on the desk.

"It's luck," he announced cryptically, turning to go. He had uttered his profoundest conviction.

James finished entering the orders of departure and closed the log. Things were going well down below. Perhaps that was his doing. Already Captain Millerton had become aware of a change in the ship. There was no longer any friction. It was like a sudden inflow of oil upon a grinding mechanism. Probably it was true, as James said, that there would be money to spend on the boilers in New York. The *Candleshoe* was an old ship, not over-well kept up. But things were running smoothly. Captain Millerton, in his cabin and in conversation with his passenger, never said it in so many words, but he knew what it was. He had experienced that change before.

Things going well down below. James could sit in his cabin and think of what had taken place. But he was not thinking in the way Mr. Harris imagined. Mr. Harris, now scowling at the Caribbean horizon and expecting the old man to come up and see Cape San Antonio for himself, was entirely unaware of the direction of the thoughts of James this evening.

He had come out of that sudden maelstrom of emotion with a feeling of release, as though the burden of Yolanda's troubled soul had been crushing him and only when she was dead could his own move freely once more. He strove to dismiss that impression of release. He closed his lips and uttered no word to anyone while he stuck to his job. They had taken the soldiers down to Rio Taga and loaded chicle and rubber there, rolling heavily in the open sea while canoes came out through the surf with the corded bundles. And it was while he was watching them hitch the winch tackle to the plunging slings below that

he felt in his pocket the letter he had received from Captain Millerton in Mr. Leake's office.

He had forgotten it in the stress of what had happened immediately after. As he drew it out and examined the London postmark, noting the large, shapely handwriting, he was aware of an impending catastrophe. Life over there was going on. But who . . . ? He thought of George Harkelaw, but that young man wrote in a small meticulously neat hand, on pale gray paper stamped with the device of his club. Not George. He thrust his thumb into the flap and paused, turning away under the awning. What was the meaning of this agitation? That shapely dashing style was familiar, though he had never seen it. It went with a gallant figure striding along beside him in the northern spring sunshine. It was like a remembered voice, clear and resonant.

He had gone down to his cabin to read the letter. It began without any formality of address, the first time he had ever received such a missive. At once he had an impression of intense intimacy. It was so new and strange that at first he could not make sense of the writing that rushed across the pages. Not even an address at the top. He frowned and concentrated.

If there was any superstition in my nature I would be inclined to believe in it after our meeting that day in Glasgow. A change in my fortunes took place immediately because on reaching the flat I found a telegram from London offering me a part I have always wanted in a play that is to tour America. Believe it or not, there seemed some foolish connection in my mind between all this and you, who had promised to bring me something from foreign parts. I am sorry for one thing, that when you arrive with my present (which of course you have *not* forgotten) I shall not be here to receive it. It seemed such a poor ending to our acquaintance that I managed to secure an address from Mr. Harkelaw which he said might reach you. (I explained I had borrowed a book and wished to return it before I left home.) He and I are dear friends, and it was but a trifle for him to bestow.

I hope you will find time to write to me and tell me your adventures. For the first month or so we shall be in New York at the Columbus Theatre on Broadway.

Of course, there are simply thousands of things to do, and I am dreadfully excited at the prospect of seeing the world at last, but I could not miss the slightest chance of letting you know and preparing you for (perhaps) the disappointment when you reach port. Believe me nothing would be more to my taste than to be in Glasgow to hear about the voyage and whether you found it *worth while*. But it was

not to be. Meeting a sailor (I remember you protested against this word, but to me you *are* a sailor, a rover of the seas) has changed my destiny, and it would be foolish, don't you think, to refuse the chance when it came.

WINIFRED ERSKINE.

P. S.—I shall be so disappointed if you do not write to me.

W. E.

Had it been a bomb suddenly exploding when he opened the envelope he could not have been more stupefied than by the letter itself. He had never dreamed that she had given him more than a passing thought. And then, as the events of the voyage came back to him, a wave of bewilderment swept over him. He thrust the whole thing from him and rushed down to the engine room to engage his mind with something tangible and comprehensible. And yet that mood hadn't lasted so long. He had stopped as he came up the ladder—so suddenly he stopped that the man following him was nearly thrown off his balance—as it came to him that the ship was bound via Havana to New York. She would be there when they docked.

He found that he had no ideas at all. His mind failed to afford him any information as to what he ought to do. When they returned to Puerto Balboa and began loading coffee from San Paulo, Captain Millerton was nonplussed by his attitude. The captain told him briefly he had been to see Mr. Barker in the hospital. Offered him his job back. Not that he wanted Mr. Barker back, mind you, but didn't like the idea of leaving him to go on the beach, blood being supposedly thicker than water. But Mr. Barker declined it. Said he was going to stay in the country. Said there was jobs going up country. Big hydro-electric scheme starting right away. Been a rolling stone long enough. Jack was buried here, and there was other things besides a billet on a tramp. Captain Millerton, reporting his conversation, was surprised to hear James say he'd have changed places with Mr. Barker.

"You!" said the captain. "Why, you'd be mad to do that. With your drag in the company. Remember there's new ships building. Don't be a damned fool."

James had gone to see Mr. Barker, too. It was a surprise to him to find how a man could change in a few days. Mr. Barker was in a ward smelling strongly of iodine and carbolic. His hand was a large white bundle of bandages. The other beds

were occupied by unshaven men with bronzed yet blanched faces and sunken eyes. One, whose head had been cloven by a machete, had his face hidden in swaths of cheesecloth that seeped dark brown stains. They lay perfectly still and looked at James.

"You don't want to come back, Mister?" James had said. Mr. Barker shook his head.

"He told us to consider ourselves finished," he said, "and I'm finished. There's a job that'll pay better'n anything Harkelaw, Govanlock 'ud ever give me. I've had the promise of it, for the day's work I did here."

"The old man didn't say . . ." began James and Mr. Barker waved his left and good hand.

"The old man didn't know," he answered in his familiar crisp tones. "The old man's too busy drawin' his fifty a month and bonus to bother about me. Well, there's all of that up country, from what I'm hearing. You needn't tell anybody—not that I think you ever open your mouth wide enough to let two words out. I was in with these bloody greasers you see here, a crowd of them. Couldn't get away from the swine. They'd formed their own union with a little squit of a Britisher, Pelham his name is, for delegate. He was going to seize the big fellow when he came in on the train. Like hell he did! I didn't like it. He wasn't a mechanic, he wasn't a boss, he wasn't even a man. He began to pal up to me, being British too. I was on a mighty awkward seat, mixin' with a lot of tripe like that, and I listened all right. He was going to welsh! He'd been tipped off they'd give him a hundred quid to quit, on the *Santa Brigida.* He had another fifty from the dues he collected from these sappy half-breeds. Why didn't I go along with him? We could hop it at Colon and make big money running a place he knew he could buy in Panama City. I went with him to the dock and plugged him in the jaw there. And then I did a hundred-yard dash for the shops. It was rainin' like hell, and I ran into two of them tryin' to head me off. Machetes! In the dark! And raining! They know now I can use a rifle as well as a hammer and chisel, anyway." He held up the ball of bandages that was his hand. "She'll be all right here in a week or so."

"No," he said as James was leaving. "If you can make that old box of misfortune turn over as far as New York, you're welcome. Jack's here, and I'll stay round a while. Las Esmeraldas Hydro-Electric Development Company. That's away to hell-angone in the mountains. But it suits me, from what I hear of

the pay. Better than the job that Yankee offered the two of us. Good luck, Mister. You'll make out, now."

"What do you mean by that?" James asked quickly. Mr. Barker shook his head and gave a sigh.

"Never mind," he said. "You'll know soon enough. Take what comes. Have a drink for me in South Street."

It was like Mr. Barker to fling back such an offer with the hint that James was lucky all along the line. Had he known of that letter James had received, his full-blooded belligerent face would have creased into a grin. He would have been unable to understand what James was shrinking from. They all thought him lucky. He was unable to see himself as they saw him. He thought his life had been long and, so far, not very successful. He judged with knowledge only of himself, and valued youth not at all. It was not possible for him to understand that Mr. Barker, when he shook his head and sighed, was thinking of the invisible glow some young men carried in their hearts.

Now, as he felt the pulsation of the ship, every turn of the propeller was taking him nearer and nearer to the woman who had written that frank and gallant letter, and farther from Yolanda, who had never written letters in her life, whose soul was in her vibrant and beautiful lips, whose tormented spirit had turned to him as a hunted wild animal turns to man for sanctuary. Now the first shock of the revelation about himself was over. He discovered that his conception of fidelity as well as of love had been based on a romantic fallacy. One couldn't measure up to the standard one got out of books, and dreams. That was the trouble—the dreams. He recalled them now with furrowed brow. Why did a fellow think all that stuff of women? Was it inevitable that the reality should always be tarnished? There was a dreadful discrepancy between what he had imagined love to be and what he had found it. But was he worth anything better? He was afraid of the turmoil this letter had evoked in his mind, of the unsuspected thoughts he now remembered and understood. The future confronted him like a dark curtain, behind which he could hear voices no longer celestial but human, warmly thrilling, and calling to him. That dark pleasure in his heart made him doubt his own integrity. So soon!

It was Mr. Claxon, taking the air on deck, who offered, unconsciously, another philosophy of life. Mr. Claxon was much more of an idealist than James could ever be, but it was an idealism matured by age and an astute knowledge of the general weak-

ness of mankind compared with his own. He was an idealist who had, as he hinted to James, "not done so badly down there after all." James thought he alluded to the girl in the spare cabin, the girl who now lay in the bed-place of Yolanda, the girl Mr. Claxon called Gina. Perhaps he did. But it wasn't long before he developed the habit of dropping down the scuttle and coming into the chief's room for a chat. It was he who did most of the talking, of course—he was used to that. They talked fast enough among themselves, these Britishers, he noticed; but on his approach their voluble discourse died.

He liked James. There was a quality in the young man's tolerant taciturnity that suited Mr. Claxon's present mood of adventurous chivalry and successful enterprise. Candour compelled Mr. Claxon to admit that he had been successful; but it was necessary to have someone to talk to. Gina lay in her bunk all day fighting mal-de-mer and a fear that she might die before the ship reached Havana. She thought of nothing else save that she was going to see her Giovanna and take her to New York. That anything could happen to her plan now never penetrated to her enraptured mind. She gazed at Mr. Claxon, when he came in to see her, entranced. Giovanna! Giovanna!

So Mr. Claxon, full of calm joy himself, would seek out James and indulge in long monologues over wet and much-chewed cigars.

"If a man," he once said, "goes pretty straight, don't cheat his wife and is a good guy when he has it, he'll make out on all the other commandments. Get on, get honour, get honest—there's the only rules that cut any ice nowadays." He meant himself at that moment when he spoke of a man. He thought aloud in James's cabin.

"A man can go on thinking he's the whole works and don't need a woman. That's just a lot o' bunk. Only a lunkhead 'ud fall for it. No, sirree, a man needs a woman to keep him straight. He's got something to fight for. Take me. I was a young feller, same's yourself, and what did I do? I got married. And we never had a cross word while she lived. Yes, sir, she was taken. We had one little girl, the very image of her mother. Say, you wouldn't think to see me here that I had a daughter engaged to be married. That's so. I'll show you her . . . No, it's in the valise. This is the lady who's on board now.

"Sir? Well, I'd put it this way. First thing a young feller needs is a stake. I dare say you're like all the other Britishers

I ever met up with—you think the whole darned world of your job. You do, eh? Well, take it from me, there's nothing to it. You want to be out working for yourself. Take me. Of course, I've had business experience, and perhaps I've got a bit of a knack at handling negotiations, you understand—got to be snappy sometimes, got to think on your feet. . . . I'll tell you, in confidence now, when it came to a showdown over this business I've been negotiating down here, I said, 'No, not a red cent less'n ten thousand iron men!' Like that! And that made 'em see who they had to deal with. You get me, Steve?"

James enjoyed these conversations, though he was often in a fog as to what Mr. Claxon meant. He seemed quite unable to utter ten consecutive words of English unobscured by his confusing idioms. It was not that his meaning was unintelligible, but that his relish for peculiar phrases made him difficult, and fascinating, to follow. James wished he would smoke his cigar or throw it away.

"Another thing," said Mr. Claxon. "A woman who *is* a woman prefers a man who's alive to the opportunities of the business world. Take me. If I hadn't been on the jump to . . . I'll tell you—you'll hear people say, 'If he's a millionaire, he's a crook: no two ways about it.' I hate all that sort of talk. Way I look at it, a man's duty's to his family, and if he don't go after the dollars he can't be a good provider. You see my romance sometimes? It was due to your romance I was able to get her away from that place where she worked. She don't know I know it, but that bird who runs the Cantina Sol, old Barrillo, was after her. He tried to make out it was the comandante. Why, it was Barrillo owned that place, the Bellavista where we had the fight to get Gina away from those crooks. But she doesn't know, and what you don't know won't hurt you. What I was going to say, first thing, Gina—Gina Rovelli's her name—asked me was, had I the means to get her away from that Barrillo? There she was, working to save the money to get back to her kid. Believe me, she's nearly crazy about it. This darned old ship can't go fast enough for her. Now, if I hadn't been Johnny on the job we'd never have brought it off. See what I mean? One of the great discoveries we've made in the United States is that only realists can afford to be idealists. I got that from one of the largest manufacturers of architectural hardware in the country. I was handling the organization of his twenty-

fifth anniversary. 'Take it from me, Claxon,' he says, 'only realists . . .'"

He talked. Sometimes James had to make him understand that it must end so that a man might get sleep. But it helped all unawares to make James see that a woman was a different woman to every man she meets. When he came face to face with Gina Rovelli on the poop, walking where Yolanda had walked, wrapped in an old shapeless waterproof against the clammy moisture of the evening, he thought her common. Only when she raised her eyes and gave him a brilliant, challenging glance that changed instantaneously to a faint smile of recognition and sympathy did he comprehend the glamour of which Mr. Claxon was the voluble victim. James wondered what lay behind that smile, and whether she would think him despicable to read and reread that letter from his own world. Probably she thought of nothing save the coming meeting with her own baby. The smile had faded very quickly as she sat on a stool in the shelter of the cabin scuttle and looked across the tumbling waters of the Yucatan channel. She had a way of looking at the sea as though it were her enemy. When Mr. Claxon would arrive and place his old plaid travelling rug carefully round her knees, she would give him a single mysterious glance and pat his shoulder once or twice. She had the Latin's inimitable genius for gestures. And James would turn from them with a sudden unutterable longing to get away forever from gestures. His very soul, torn and bleeding, cried out against the ceaseless strain of reading the language of an alien heart by alien gestures and the tragic gleams in a beloved face. It was plain that Mr. Claxon was intoxicated with the happiness of his romance. He kept the pallid Alvarez on the run with errands for Gina.

As they came up upon Havana through a racing sea of blue jade with wax-white wave caps culminating in thunderous explosions below the Morro, James saw them clinging to the rail, pointing. It reminded him of that strange experience of his own when he first went ashore there. Rain squalls fled across the hills or swept down upon the sea, and cloud masses sent swift shadows over the house fronts and jumbled roofs. And beneath the exultation he felt at the sight of the city and the lovely hills, at the signs of life and labour and a familiar creed, James was aware of a change in his conception of love. With all his bluster and egotism, Mr. Claxon was in love with Gina and not a phantom. He had said to James, "I know all about it.

We're going to get her little girl." James, thinking of Faustine and that affrighting room in the Paradiso bedecked as a bridal chamber, wondered whether he did know all about it. And even then, perhaps he did. He was in love with the woman herself. That was the secret. He was fond of calling her "my romance," but that was only his way of concealing the genuineness of his emotions. James understood that for him, as for Captain Millerton with his boarding-house-keeping wife, and Mr. Punshon with the sharp Scotswoman who made him put on a frock coat and top hat for Sunday church, love transcended the flesh and the romantic hunger for beauty. And the question confronted him, as he went below to the stand-by bell, what he himself was going to do. Now he had the key of the problem he still had that letter—that letter to deal with. He would have to answer it somehow.

At the anchorage off Cabanas Castle Mr. Harris stood at the gangway waiting for a boat. He was wearing an old waterproof and a straw hat. He had the look of a youth who had dressed hurriedly and was absconding with the secret of the universe. Beneath his air of extreme spiritual neglect, Mr. Harris bore himself with a sort of spurious optimism. He was off on his eternal hunt for romance, for Priapus and for the sirens. He bowed his head to a sudden lashing of raindrops. He seemed to be confident that all those delights were just beyond the Custom House.

"Mister," he said, thrusting his head sideways in a characteristic way, "you for the beach? You going ashore here." James shook his head, smiling a little at Mr. Harris and his eternal search for something that was forever to elude him.

"You going ashore in New York, Mister?" Mr. Harris proceeded, stepping on the grating and shaking the rain from his hat. James nodded.

"I may do that," he said, with a sudden and unexpected decision.

Mr. Harris looked to see if the boat was ready, and suddenly produced a newspaper fragment. James saw the rows of numbers, and watched the second mate's forefinger with its bitten nail pointing to a number.

"Know how I got it?" said Mr. Harris. "Ship's Register. Well, it isn't a fortune, but it's a fi' pun note. Twenty-five dollars gold, mind you. If you come ashore I'm at Sloppy Joe's. Why not come ashore? Eh? Why not? Wet this."

"No," said James, thinking of New York.

"I don't believe you know you're alive after all," said Mr. Harris. "You only live once, you know." He clattered down the ladder.

James did not answer.

He was not so sure.

CHAPTER XVIII

SHE saw him first.

He was standing in the alley that led out into the roaring brilliance of Broadway, as though uncertain whether to go or stay. He was daunted and yet exhilarated by the amazing vitality of the place. It was something beyond his previous experience altogether. Cities he had seen, from his own to Calcutta and Rangoon. He had seen the Bund of Shanghai and the temples of Osaka; but nothing like this. The grind and jangle of the crowded trolley car, the swarm of people swirling about the bases of enormous buildings like tides around fabulous cliffs. Nobody looked at him. He was lost in an incredible world. He spoke to a policeman who did not understand him. He followed the numbered streets with a smile of a newly found delight on his face. He was thinking of Puerto Balboa, of that lonely coast beaten forever by the unheeded surf, of the solitary grandeur of the snow-capped mountains of Santa Agata, of the sombre warfare of passions being fought out among those distant ranges and on the far plateaus. He thought of Señora Munn in her stuffy hotel, hoarding money and nursing her imaginary passion for an oblivious countryman. This, its terrible antithesis, seemed good to him, after all, strange as it might be. And when he found the place he was seeking he had come to another conclusion. He knew he could never go back to live in Costaragua. His life lay among other scenes. This was more like it. He was afraid of it a little, but only because of its enormous volume, its strident speed and strangeness. He was lucky. They all said he was lucky. Mr. Punshon, tuning his fiddle for an evening of music on board down in South Street, when he heard James had "friends in the city," made that remark. Captain Millerton said the same thing in another way. He alluded to some young fellows who had all the luck, and let fall a sober warning about bunco steerers and knockout drops in the saloons of the city.

He was waiting, after having sent his name into the theatre. Men and women hurried past him without looking at him. He

was beginning to wonder if anything would happen after all, when she was there before him.

It was some time before he could find his tongue to answer her delighted questions. The arrival of the slip of paper with his name on it just as she reached the dressing room had struck her as something supernatural. She had stared at it so fixedly that the other women, who had cards and boxes of candy and bunches of flowers on their tables, stopped talking in wonder. She had had to explain.

She told him this breathlessly, standing before him in her street clothes and holding his hand. They went out into the roaring thoroughfare that was like a river in flood with the theatre crowds going home, going to suppers, going to dances, thronging in and out of candy stores and saloons, illuminated by the millions of winking lights along the Way. And presently he told her how he had had her letter and how the ship had loaded for New York and—here he was. She was radiant with the extraordinary fortune of it. She saw something in his face that fascinated her. She pressed his arm and said she was hungry; why could they not have supper somewhere? She knew a place on Forty-sixth Street, quite close at hand.

"Now, tell me," she said when they were at a little table, and he was startled.

"Tell what?" he asked uncertainly.

"Oh! Everything!" she said, putting her chin on her hands and bending a brilliant enigmatic glance upon his face. "I'm sure you have had adventures. You went on shore, of course, and then . . ."

He was silent for a moment.

"Yes," he said. "I was ashore a bit. But I couldn't tell you everything. I doubt if it would interest you."

"Everything about you interests me," she said with a sudden gravity.

"But how can that be?" he broke out. "I thought——No, I don't understand."

He began to tell her what he had never understood.

"But why should I not be interested in you?" she asked. "What else could it have meant when I asked you to write to me? Do you think I ask all the men I meet to write to me?"

He said he didn't think anything of the kind. He said he assumed that as a friend of her friend George Harkelaw he had

been privileged, that she had been interested because of him going to sea, and she wanted . . .

"And you forgot to get it for me," she challenged.

"No, it's on the ship," he said. "I got something in Havana, though." And he thrust his hand into his breast pocket.

"How did you know?" she asked when she had opened the long gilded box and brought out a fan of black silk with golden lilies. "It's very beautiful, James, and you're a dear boy."

"A man came off with some to sell," he said.

"You didn't go on shore then?"

"Not on the way home."

"But you did on the way out. But you thought about what I said. You thought about me? You know, James, what made me write that letter? It wasn't just that I was coming to America. It was a feeling that if you knew you had someone thinking of you at home, you might feel better and not—well, you know you're very romantic, James, and it was possible you might . . ."

She put the fan in its box and went on with her dinner.

"Did George Harkelaw tell you about me?" he asked. She nodded.

"I made him. George and I are old friends."

"Aye, I was thinking all the time you'd have him to write to, you see. . . ."

"Oh, I saw him in London before we sailed. James, George Harkelaw asked me to marry him."

James did not say anything. He went on with his dinner.

"Did you understand what I said?" she asked and he nodded in turn.

"Aye," he said. "I was thinking it was that way."

"I refused him," she said.

When they had finished supper, she told him to get a taxi. She told the driver to go up as far as the Park and back to her hotel on Seventh Avenue. James lay back and watched the magic of the city that was a crown of light upon the velvet darkness of the heavens. He lay back and thought of Mr. Harris standing at the cabin door, his eyes on the ground, saying suddenly, "It's luck." Was it? He didn't know. The fact was, he had done his duty. He had been braced and ready to go on with it. Even now he was aware of a feeling of supreme tenderness. As long as he lived he would remember that last interview in the shuttered chamber of the Pension Francia. Luck was a

tricky word to use. Sometimes any words at all seemed to falsify what a man felt. It was characteristic of James Wishart that at such a thought he should act upon it and remain silent.

Suddenly Winifred Erskine, who had not divined that thought, spoke in the darkness. The taxi was rolling through the trees of the Park.

"James, you didn't get the second letter I wrote you, did you? They said at the postoffice the mail had gone, but I thought. . . ."

"What was it?" he asked absently.

"I'm relieved," she said smiling, "I didn't expect to see you like this, James. George Harkelaw told me one thing he said I could mention if I was writing to you, though. They have ordered two new ships. And he said the railway down where you have been is to be finished at once. He was very excited. A large flotation of bonds, he said, in London. And you know he has been very successful himself, James. His new play *The Scarlet Tam,* is running in London as well as in Glasgow."

James looked suddenly at her in the darkness, and she saw a queer expression come into his face.

"What?" he said. "What does he call it?" and she repeated the name of the play. James looked out away from her for a moment, thinking of how George had got that phrase and all it had meant, so long ago, to himself.

"James, you didn't get my first letter too late, did you? You—you're free, aren't you?"

He heard her voice close to his ear, thrilling with emotion.

"Aye," he said, smiling gravely, "I'm free."

THE END

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